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ANTONIO ROSMINI SERBATI

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LETTERS

(CHIEFLY ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS)

OF

ANTONIO ROSMINI SERBATI

FOUNDER OF THE INSTITUTE OF CHARITY



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PREFACE.

THE volume which is now presented to the English public contains a collection of letters written in a familiar style, chiefly on religious subjects, and selected from the *Epistolario di Antonio Rosmini*, published at Turin in 1857 in two volumes. These familiar unstudied letters are an unconscious manifestation of the inner life of a great servant of God. They reveal his simple manly piety, his affectionate heart, and more than all that spirit of abandonment to Divine Providence and that abnegation of self, which were his special characteristics.

Of Rosmini's Letters the Very Rev. Michael Haringer, C.SS.R., a Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of the Index, writes thus:—

“ By command of the Most Rev. T. Vincent M. Gatti, O. P., Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace; I, the undersigned, have read and examined with attention the two volumes of letters written by the most illustrious Antonio Rosmini, and I have found in them noble evidences of most genuine faith, of great zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, of most tender devotion to the Mother of God, and of all

other virtues. The reading of these letters will be conducive to edification. Wherefore I see nothing to hinder their being published."

It is hoped that this English version will be of service to those among Rosmini's spiritual children who are unacquainted with the Italian language. At the same time it may not be devoid of interest for a wider circle of readers.

D. GAZZOLA.

ST. MARY'S, RUGBY.

13th June, 1901.

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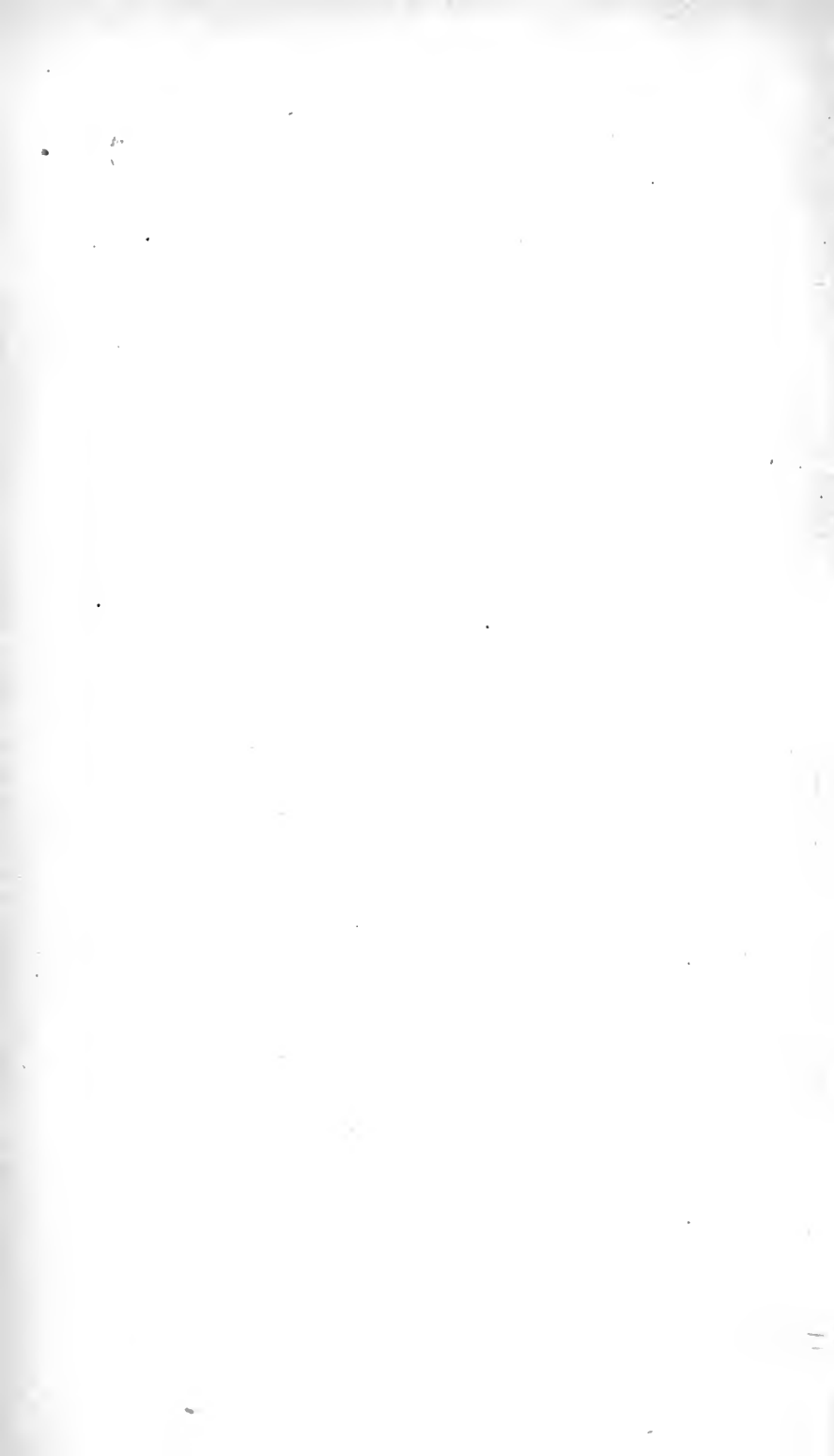
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SECTION I.

Personal Letters.

I.

TO BARTOLOMEO MENOTTI.

The writer resolves to become a priest and to give himself wholly to God.

Rovereto,

Sept. 22nd, 1814.

I have received your letter and thank you heartily for it. I am most grateful for the good advice you give me, *to be always mindful of the Christian Commonwealth!* This indeed is beautiful, great and true, for there is no wisdom here below except such as comes from the Father of lights. Rest assured therefore that literature has of itself no charm for me.

I have made up my mind to become a priest and to give up all I have in order to buy a treasure which neither rust nor moth can consume and which thieves cannot break through and steal. I mean, with the help of God, to make use of such little learning as I possess in the work of instructing others. Could there be a more beautiful task? My physical powers shall also be pressed into service, and my worldly means employed in promoting science and relieving the poor. These resolutions are dictated not by reason only, but also by my heart. Continue, as a true friend, to recommend me to our Lord. I am and shall always be yours,

A. R.

II.

TO DON LUIGI SONN.

He gives his reasons for having chosen the ecclesiastical state.

Rovereto,

Aug. 8th, 1815.

How can I fail to agree with what you say of the ecclesiastical state! No other motive could have induced me to choose this, to me, delightful profession than that of giving myself in a special manner and entirely to the Lord God, striving to glorify Him as far as it is in man to do so. My only wish is to learn and preach His holy Law, imparting as it does wisdom to babes and knowledge to the ignorant; my only aim to enrich my brethren with this treasure more precious than gold or jewels, and sweeter than honey, to share it with those whom I love so tenderly in Jesus Christ. This, dear friend,—the Lord in His goodness helping me—this is my only aim, the one desire of my heart; to this end are directed all my labours and my studies. These studies, delightful though they be, involve such painful efforts as to make man conscious of his sinful origin. But I should be ready to lay down my life, aye, to lose it in the most painful way for the love of God. Believe me, Luigi, I speak from my heart, for I have no secrets from you. Insipid (mark what I say), insipid, tedious rather, would the most brilliant learning seem to me, were it not flavoured with the love of God and a pure intention.

Your friend,

ANTONIO.

III.

TO COUNT ANTONIO FEDRIGOTTI AT ROVERETO.

On the occasion of assuming the clerical habit.

Padua,

November 7th, 1817.

I take occasion to send you news of our safe arrival by the carriage that brought us here. I have to-day put on the clerical habit for the first time. May God, who has called me to serve in His temple, bestow upon me a pure heart, a great mind and an energetic spirit, that I may not fall short in so holy an office! Since this burden has been put upon me I have not ceased to pray to that effect, and I beg you to add your prayers to mine. I frequently recommend you to our Lord, praying that we may still walk together in His presence, towards the same goal if by diverse paths. Your friends in Padua, though sorry to lose you, approve of your resolution in the event of your not being called to the career you had first thought of. I should like to hear something of your studies. You will, I trust, make progress in learning as in piety; guard your innocence as you would your life, for it is easy to fall and most difficult to rise again. May the most pure and Blessed Virgin protect you amid the dangers to which you are exposed!

Your cousin,

ANTONIO.

IV.

TO MGR. MANFRIN PROVVEDI, BISHOP OF CHIOGGIA.

He expresses his gratitude to the bishop, who had raised him to the priesthood.

Rovereto,
April 29th, 1821.

On my return home I feel it a duty to express to your Lordship my deep sense of gratitude for the singular benefits and kindness received at your hands. To you am I indebted, in the first place, for what I hold to be the most precious treasure in the world, none other being comparable to Holy Orders; and for this favour I can make no return unless it be a heart ever mindful of so great a benefit. God will supply for my insufficiency, and thus you will not be the loser. The kindness shown me by your household, amongst whose members you deigned to admit me, unworthy as I am, will be the subject of undying remembrance. I beg you to thank them in my name.

Your presence is anxiously awaited and desired. We hope to see you for certain this autumn; and I trust that you will make use of my house such as it is. Ah! Had we but your Lordship for our Bishop! God's Will be done in all things. Certainly it would be a great pleasure to us and we have need of some one like your Lordship. With sentiments of profound veneration I am your Lordship's obedient servant.

A. R.

(NOTE) The See of Trent was at that time vacant.

V.

TO DON GIULIO TODESCHI AT MARANO.

On the holy name of Jesus : the care of Christ's little ones.

Milan,

Sept. 30th 1826.

Your letters are always most welcome, distilling as they do that fragrance which penetrates the inmost recesses of the soul, because they contain the name of Our Saviour and Redeemer. Well did St. Bernard say that no book had any relish for him which did not contain the most amiable of all names, the name of Jesus. So indeed it should ever be ; all that is not signed and seasoned with this name should be despised by Christians. Alas ! I am not worthy to pronounce it. Your letter, which reached me at Milan, is adorned with this name, and the same design, more appropriate than any heraldic device, figures in your last letter also. Accept my thanks for both.

In your first letter you mentioned that you would like some presents for your little ones. I sent a few small things ; they were not what I should have liked, but nothing else was to be had. You are indeed privileged, destined to lead to God many of the little ones so dear to our Lord. If the crime of scandalizing one of these children is denounced by Christ in such terrible words, surely there must be proportionate merit and hope in caring for and teaching them.

At Milan there are several Oratories for young men which do much good. I used to go to them on feast days, rather to learn than to teach, though I gave short discourses and conferences when asked to do so. You are quite right : I, who take so much pleasure in

ministering to the wants of souls, have not been called by our Lord as yet to this sublime ministry. I feel deeply how much reason He has to keep me, as it were a step behind, outside the "Inner Sanctuary," if I may so call the Pastoral office. I certainly desire, or at least wish to desire, nothing but the fulfilment of His adorable will. What else can I desire, save to serve my Lord and my God in the way in which He would have me serve Him? *What have I in heaven and beside Thee what do I desire on earth?* Would that I could become once for all a faithful servant, not as I am now slothful and inconstant! I think, unless I am deceiving myself, that I am indifferent as to the kind of service required of me by the Lord, whether it be mean and contemptible or great and laborious; all appears the same to me provided I can become once for all a faithful servant. Ah! dear friend and brother in the Lord, pray earnestly that I may obtain this grace; nothing else do I desire save this one thing.

I am eagerly awaiting your arrival that I may embrace you *in Domino*. Come, but come soon; otherwise you may not find me here, as I have promised to take my cousin Carlo back to Milan. Continue to love me as you now do; go on working for God in the building up of His temple, in shaping and polishing the living stones. Be assured that I love you in Him who is the source of all our love. Pray to Him for your friend and brother priest.

A. R.

VI.

TO DON GIULIO TODESCHI AT ROVERETO.

Sentiments of humility and confidence in Christ.

Milan,

Feb. 4th, 1827.

I am here immersed in studies. Thanks be to God who gives me strength for the work. The Divine will in my regard is made more manifest every day. I shall have to remain here some time yet. How pleasant it would be to see my dear friends and my good Giulio !

I implore you to pray earnestly for me. Would that I had a spark of the fervour you speak of, and that I had drawn profit from these Christmas festivals, during which Jesus has come to visit us ! Had not my heart been harder than stone, I should certainly have been touched and filled with grief for my faults, and with gratitude to the Divine Goodness. But it was not so, my dear Giulio, it was not so : I am as bad as before if not worse. *Non peccator, peccatum sum.* My only comfort is that the depth of our misery causes the Divine mercy to shine forth most vividly. God will not deny Himself one of the greatest of His glories, that of *raising up children to Abraham from the very stones.* Let us unite our efforts ; let us pray, let us pray. Let us detach ourselves still more from the things of earth, and begin at length to lead such a life as will afford us consolation at the hour of death.

What bliss ! To live on earth as though we were in heaven ; to say *our conversation is in heaven.* What happi-

ness in the hope that Christ liveth in us! *I live; now not I but Christ liveth in me.* This is the only object of my desires, the extreme limit of my aspirations. What afflicts me is to think how far I am from attaining thereto. How I resist and hinder the grace of God!

I embrace you in the Lord. Farewell. Love me in our Lord in whom I also love you.

A. R.

VII.

TO DON SILVESTRI BELLI AT ROME.

His desire to visit Rome.

Milan,

Aug. 6th, 1827.

Whenever you speak of going to Rome you arouse in me a great temptation. I have long wished to visit Rome, but I have always resisted the temptation. You will want to know why. It is on account of the rule of conduct I have laid down for myself. I should be uneasy and inconsolable if I thought I had followed my own inclination rather than the will of God. That is why I always remain passive with regard to all such proposals, feeling sure that if God requires anything of me He will give me some clear indication of His holy will. Is not He who has bestowed speech on us able to use it Himself, clearly and unmistakably?

You cannot imagine the peace and tranquility which this rule gives me. The Lord disposes of all things sweetly and we taste this sweetness if we submit ourselves to His guidance. I may mention however that my going to Rome seems a settled thing, but I cannot say for certain when it will be; perhaps sooner than I expect. Let us pray, my dear friend, let us pray with one accord. And let the centre of our thoughts and affections be Holy Church, for which I beg of our Lord to let me die.

A. R.

VIII.

TO DON SEBASTIANO DE APPOLLONIA AT UDINE.

On the success of his writings. The fear of God's judgment.

Rome,

Holy Saturday, 1829.

I hear that God has visited you with a great trial in the illness of your mother. I doubt not that you have blessed and thanked Him for this as for all other things and that you have prepared yourself for the many trials to come.

Gioia, poor man, is dead (1). People here consider that in the controversy between us he was utterly routed, and they seem to be applying to me the words of Dante, *Gliene diè cento e non sentì le diece.*

(He gave him a hundred but ten were enough.)

I receive letters to the same effect from Milan and the Tyrol. Thanks be to God: to Him alone be the glory, and salvation to the souls of His redeemed. This, if I am not deceiving myself, is the only object that has induced me to write and work: I would fain add, it is my only object in life. Nothing is good save the glory of our adorable King, the true King of glory. All else is vanity, illusion, nothing! I am expecting further news about my writings and the effect produced by the doctrines contained therein. Let us propagate sound doctrines, doctrines which will save the world if fertilized by divine grace. How corrupt the world is! How wild are the ravings of men!

With all my heart I thank you for the kind assistance

(1) Gioia was the author of several popular but pernicious works on philosophical subjects.

of your prayers. God will repay you. I implore you to go on praying, lest in all my labours I should be as one beating the air and at length become a castaway myself. The very thought fills me with consternation, and my hand trembles as I write. There are times when I would fain weep for my sins and I find the fount of my tears dried up. Fearful, indeed, is the thought of appearing at the tribunal of God, and I am seized with horror at the sight of my misery. Seeing that I never amend my ways I could only wish that my end were near, in order not to add to the number of my sins; on the other hand, the thought of death (and sometimes my bodily weakness makes me believe it near at hand) fills me with doubt and fear on account of the uncertain condition of my soul. I cannot escape from this anguish, this unspeakable, well-nigh mortal agony, except by turning my eyes to the crucifix, and hiding myself in the open Wounds of the Hands and Side, *in foraminibus petrae*, and beneath the mantle of the most compassionate of all women, His and my Mother. Jesus and Mary! These are the two names of power, the source of unfailing hope. When I am alarmed at my weakness and filled with uncertainty as to those inmost recesses of my heart, which none but God can gauge until the secrets of all hearts be revealed, then these sacred names bring me a profound calm and a ray of consolation, which cheers me amid fears and sadness. Pray that this consolation, this confidence which sustains me and gives me life (for in myself I put no confidence) may never fail me. Pray that my confidence in God may grow with the increase of grace, and that my will strengthened by grace may direct all my actions to God alone. Happy should I be if the Author of Grace so reigned in me as He reigns in the material world, without encountering any hindrance on the part of my corrupt nature! Happy should I be if God, who is the only true Life, were the life of my soul! How sublime is the purpose of God! All His works have for their object to raise that which is *nothing* to that which is *All*. Truly, in the words of Scripture, all

His works are perfect, truly are they exceeding good, *valde bona*.

Ah, my dear friend, if you love me, if we are united in that Lord in whom are all they that live, increase the ardour of your supplications to Him from whom I expect the greatest of all mercies. I say the greatest, because I look not for temporal favours,—though they too are mercies of the Lord,—but for the amendment of my evil ways, for the union of my heart and of my entire self with God ; in a word, for the salvation of my soul, that eternal salvation in which all aspirations will find attainment. Obtain also the prayers of those good, devout persons with whom you are acquainted. The time is short, moments are precious ; let us employ them in securing our salvation, our great salvation. I should never finish were I to endeavour to to express in words all I feel on this important subject. I therefore appeal to your own convictions, which are, I feel sure, deeper than anything that can be conveyed by pen and ink. Give me your assistance, for if I succeed in entering Paradise before you, then at least, I shall be able to prove my gratitude to you in every possible way, for I shall be near to the Fount of all good and shall be able to help you. But I must conclude ; these few words will be enough to enlist your charity. I should like to tell you about the principal object of my journey ; but let it suffice you to know that everything seems to be progressing, by God's assistance, smoothly and well. The will of God will be accomplished without doubt, and that is the object which I have in view. Adieu.

A. R.

SECTION II.

Letters relating to the Foundation of the Institute of Charity.

I.

TO THE MARCHESA MADDALENA DI-CANOSSA.

On the project of the Brothers of Charity.

Rovereto,

January 20th, 1824.

According to your suggestion I will not mention the proposed *Congregation of Brothers of Charity*, when writing to our new Bishop, but will speak only of the *Sisters of Charity*.

By the expression which I used in my last letter regarding exterior forms of devotion, I only meant to say that the *Brothers of Charity*, as a Congregation of persons devoted to the service of God, should identify themselves as far as possible with the public forms of the Church. I will explain myself. The Church has registered her devotions and prayers in certain books, chiefly the Missal, the Breviary, and the Martyrology, in which we find a treasure of solid piety and tender affections. But most people find them too high and difficult. This I account for by the disuse into which the Latin tongue has fallen, the insufficient instruction given nowadays, in consequence of which certain grave and solemn thoughts are not appreciated, and finally the love of Church music rather for the sake of the harmonies than for the sentiments expressed

by the words. Now, I think it would be extremely useful if a society of persons, dedicated to the service of God, were to take it upon themselves to perform and assist with devotion at these holy functions. To illustrate my meaning; how deficient we are, as a body, in the matter of assisting at Holy Mass. Why so? Because, as a rule, we are *insufficiently instructed*: 1st as to the mystery of this Holy Sacrifice; 2nd, as to the procedure of the sacred rite as a whole; 3rd, as to the meaning of the words used by the priest, spoken generally in the plural number, as if the people not only understood them, but made them their own,—which is really the intention of Holy Church; 4th, as to the symbolic meaning of the sacred vestments, vessels and ceremonies used at Holy Mass. How much more profitable is the Mass to one who is well instructed! How much more intimate is the union between Jesus Christ, the priest who offers the Holy Sacrifice, and the assistant who joins with him in offering the same Divine Victim! This right understanding of the Liturgy was established by the Apostles and left by them in heritage to the Church. But when, for reasons mentioned above, this devotion became too difficult, other pious practices, good and useful in themselves, were introduced to meet the needs of those who, for one reason or another, could not keep up with the *great public devotion of the Church*. These devotions, good as they undoubtedly are, are yet less ancient and of a different type, and are therefore not comparable to those other fundamental devotions in the case of those persons whom a little study would enable to follow them. On account of the limitation of human nature, these minor devotions distract people from that complete, public, external union with the Church which is brought about when the people pray in the same form, in the same sense, and with the very words of the priest. If we cannot hope to attain this in the case of the common people, why, I say, should not the study of the liturgy be the special care of a pious Congregation, the members of which would naturally be

better instructed themselves and qualified to instruct others in the true spirit of devotion? In a word, I should like the *Brothers of Charity* to study the best means of drawing profit from what is found *in the books used by the Church* and from her public functions. I do not intend by this to exclude absolutely every other pious practice, for other devotions may be good and necessary, especially in a religious order; but I only mean to point out the form of devotion most dear to me.

I hope you will believe that I have said this not with the intention of giving you instruction on the point, but simply for the sake of making clear what may have been obscure in my last letter. Pray for me.

A. R.

II.

TO THE MARCHESA DI CANOSSA AT VERONA.

Reasons for changing his previous opinion and for wishing the Congregation to consist of Priests : Object and leading principles of the proposed Society.

Rovereto,

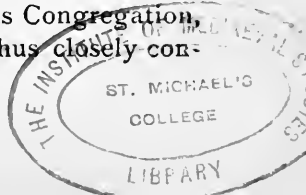
December 10th, 1825.

What can you have thought of me for leaving a letter of yours unanswered for a whole year ? That I must be, at the very least, an unmannerly clown, and if you have spared me it has been a great act of virtue on your part. But without wishing to excuse myself, I may say that I have at least always desired to write and hoped to have something definite if not satisfactory to say. This illusive hope has drawn me on from day to day and has well nigh made me disappear from the scene of action altogether.

I will come at once to what lies so near my heart, namely the *Brothers of Charity*. You did not mention the subject in your last letter. Did you think I had forgotten it ? It is present to my mind and dear to my heart. I have also recommended the matter warmly to God and have changed my mind as to the society being formed of laymen. You are quite right ; it must be a congregation of priests. But at the same time there has sprung up in my heart a desire which I shall perhaps never relinquish, though I am waiting for further light from our Lord in order to know His will. The constant and unchangeable spirit of the Congregation is that traced by you in the *Plan* you sent me. It proceeds from the affectionate commemorations of the Blood shed by our Adorable Saviour : a spirit of charity, charity towards God and towards our neighbour :

personal holiness, and the sanctification of others; contemplation and action, the two pivots of Christian virtue. This spirit, common to all the saints, has always been resplendent in the Church, adapting herself as she always does to the manifold needs of men and to varying circumstances, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who breathes where He wills, and being One, divides His gifts among many, charity thus making itself *all things to all men*. Considering the needs of the Church in these times, I have come to the conclusion that one of the greatest is some means of drawing the clergy together and training them in those exercises of charity which you mention. I think this need can only be supplied by communities of priests, such as your Brothers of Charity would be.

The modification I should like to suggest would not consist, however, in diminishing the works of charity which you mention; I should rather increase their number. *A propos* of this I would ask you to consider how great and sublime is the ministry of the care of souls instituted by our Lord in the Church. The heart of a bishop, of a parish priest should be a very ocean of charity, because there is no good work which does not enter into the sacred ministry. This government or organization, or administration of the holy Church as I prefer to call it, contains in itself the germ, so to speak, of all the institutes directed to the sanctification of the world and the propagation of charity. I do not think that this model should be abandoned. It seems to me that among so many excellent institutions the best will be that which is built on this foundation: on the foundation, that is to say, of the ecclesiastical ministry, to which has been entrusted the mission of carrying out all holy and charitable undertakings. Let us extend these good works and reduce them as much as possible to order and system, preserving as far as we can the character of the divine mission. If a certain tendency or aptitude to incorporate itself with the ministry established in the Church by Jesus Christ were given to this Congregation, would it not be highly honoured to be thus closely con-



nected with an institution founded by Christ Himself. This connection would enable us to confute the objections of those who are always afraid of new institutions, on the ground that they bring division instead of greater unity to the Church, which certainly is stronger and more beautiful in proportion to her unity. I am speaking, you know, of the external beauty of the Church; her interior and essential beauty is perfect; nothing increases, nothing impairs it, because it is infinite in Jesus Christ. How beautiful is the thought I have so often heard you express, that we should have a *great heart*: that our Lord is great; and that the Christian does an injury to his Lord by not appreciating His greatness! Truly nothing is so vast as not to seem narrow to the heart of the true disciple. From the above you can form an idea of the plan upon which, if it please God, the society of regular priests, bound by vows, should be founded. I subjoin a preliminary sketch.

I. These priests united together in order to promote their own sanctification have in view a two-fold object—the *love of God* and of *their neighbour*. They should by preference occupy themselves in all that pertains to the love of God and their own sanctification: their one desire should be to contemplate and praise God in peace and gladness of heart. Labours of charity towards their neighbour ought to be undertaken at their neighbour's request, to which they should respond to the best of their ability.

II. They are in *entire dependence* on their Superiors, who will determine the order to be observed in their labours of charity. No particular offices of charity are prescribed for the Congregation as a whole; none are excluded. The Congregation undertakes works of charity only when requested to do so, and according to the *order of charity*. All this depends on the *prudence* of Superiors, who receive the requests made by any one having need of these priests, and who with the help of judicious assistants, must decide whether they have subjects capable of the office, and in the case of their having them, are bound to accede.

III. The Rules determine which offices of charity are to be preferred in the case of simultaneous demands. The principal rule is to accept and give the preference to the offices of the ecclesiastical ministry, which contains in itself the most fundamental and universal charity.

IV. In the event of a subject being made parish priest he becomes thereby the Superior of the Congregation in that parish ; for the offices of the sacred ministry (where they exist) always identify themselves with the offices of the Congregation.

From the above you will understand what a preparation these priests will require, how long and rigorous must be their noviceship. They must make a complete and continual sacrifice of themselves to the will of Superiors ; they only live for the Church, ready also to die for her. Such men would become truly the Brothers of Charity described by you, *omnibus omnia*, whenever they were called upon and were able to exercise their charity. The Superiors, in their prudence, would only accept such undertakings as the Congregation could competently carry out. I hope to receive further light from your charity, and I beg your intercession with our Lord.

A. R.

III.

TO THE SAME.

On the same subject. Answer to objections.

Rovereto,

June 24th, 1826.

The last time I wrote I had to begin by making excuses for my negligence. This time I ought perhaps to apologise for my importunity, disturbing you as I do in the midst of your occupations with my interminable scrawls. I am sure however that you would be indulgent with me, even if I did not deserve compassion. To tell the truth, I have been unable to refrain from trespassing on your kindness: so great is the interest I take in your proposed Institute, and so ardent is my desire to profit by your counsel. I venture therefore to set before you the result of my reflections on the subject of your difficulties.

When there is a question of founding a religious order there are two points to be observed: one consists in ascertaining the will of God in its regard; the other in judging of it according to theological opinion and the ordinary views of human prudence. I myself firmly believe that all the holy Founders of the great religious Orders were men inspired, to whom God showed, as He did to Moses, the model of the order they were pre-ordained to establish. Hence I am quite convinced that the holy Founders you name, St. Cajetan, St. Ignatius and others, have done well in excluding the *dignities*, or, I should prefer to say, the *burdens* of the ecclesiastical ministry. This proves that such was the will of God; that in those times, in those circumstances, in accordance with the ends for which they were founded, the abstention of these Orders from the

pastoral ministry was the best thing that could be done. I remember reading how Marcellus II., before he became Pope, had a long dispute with a worthy Jesuit, trying to persuade him it would have been better if the Society had accepted such posts in the Church; and that the religious could find no reasons sufficiently strong to convince the Cardinal, until finally he brought forward the authority of St. Ignatius, on which he gave in at once.* And this was only right; because there is no questioning such authority. This proves that God so willed it: that in that case it was an excellent thing, though the rules of human prudence might have suggested and commanded the contrary. In fact we have a great lesson taught by those words of our Lord which tell us that the Father alone knows *the times and the moments*; and hence I think this point cannot be decided until God has made known His will more clearly.

Humanly speaking therefore, and according to my own feelings, I fully understand your fears; I understand that were there no other cause for fear, this introduction of ecclesiastical duties would be a source of great danger to a religious order, where relaxation enters so easily on all sides and may bring the Order to destruction, as you well remark. In spite of this, however, I should not like to impugn the infinite mercies of God or place a limit to the marvels which He operates in His servants. This divine mercy shines forth so vividly in the charity of the servants of God that the Apostle does not hesitate to speak of charity making itself *all to all*, which eulogy reaches the infinite and yet cannot be said to be exaggerated. The Apostle shows us charity as being truly all-powerful and triumphing over everything; and for my part I firmly believe that God would add to His mercy this glory also, that through the charity which animates them, His servants should sustain all earthly dignities without being in the least sullied by them. I should rather say that this victory over all secular and ecclesiastical ambition has

* Bartoli, *Life of St. Ignatius*, Book iii. Chap. 6.

already been gained by innumerable servants of God, who as regards the exterior have lived amidst dignities, and yet in the most profound abjection as regards the interior. Consider, how great this virtue is, although less apparent and ostentatious than that which despoils itself of all external splendour; consider the merit of so great a victory; how pleasing it must be in the eyes of God; how useful to mankind! For my part, I look upon it as, perhaps, the most perfect act of charity; and in fact our Lord ascribed the most perfect act of charity to no other profession than to that of the shepherd when He said "*the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep,*" having already said, "*greater charity no man hath than this that he lay down his life for his friends.*" Thus the profession of the pastoral ministry implies absolutely, as its characteristic, the act of the greatest charity. And St. Thomas Aquinas in his little work on the perfection of the spiritual life, shows the episcopal state to be more perfect even than the religious state just on account of this perfection of charity permanently inherent in it; and he says that other ecclesiastics who have the care of souls also practise an *act* of charity more perfect than religious, although they cannot be said to be in a more perfect *state*, because they are not permanently attached to the pastoral ministry. Hence, it is in the pastoral ministry that Jesus Christ has placed the germs of all perfection, and no two things can be better adapted to each other than the religious profession and the pastoral office, both embracing perfection of life, which can consist only in charity.

You will say that you do not deny the perfection of the pastoral state, but that you know it to be very difficult and that holy men have always fled from it.—To the first objection I answer that where the shepherd has entered through the door of the sheep-fold and not through the window like a thief, abundant graces are found in the ministry itself enabling him to support the burden. The great Prince of shepherds it is who supports His co-operators; were it otherwise Jesus Christ would only have

provided a snare for souls in establishing the sacred ministry. At the same time that we fear the danger of vanity, or the responsibility of ecclesiastical office we should not so exaggerate the difficulty as to wrong Him who sends us.—With regard to the second difficulty I quite agree with you, that such posts are not to be sought but rather to be avoided by each one as far as it depends on himself. Such has been the doctrine and the practice of all the Saints. But let me call your attention to the second of the four articles* in my former letter. I have there laid down that in the proposed society no individual member can aspire to anything in the world, being under the obligation of practising unlimited obedience; and that all depends on the Council of the Superior, with whom rests the appointment to honourable as well as to abject offices. This committee, presided over by the Superior, shall prudently consider whether it be opportune to employ the members, and whether they be sufficiently mature to be exposed to such and such dangers. And these weighty deliberations must by the very constitution of the Order be quite free from all ulterior considerations. In the sketch of the four articles I did not mention the precautions with which everything would be surrounded. I would also ask you to take note that not all holy men have considered the religious state incompatible with the sacred ministry. Attempts to unite them were made by St. Augustine and St. Eusebius, and in the sixteenth century by St. Charles and his Oblates; and to the work of these three saints and their imitators do we owe the reforms effected at various times amongst the clergy, that is, in the Church of God.

Consider the question from another point of view, and you will see how well such an Institute would be adapted to present needs. In these days we require people who are proof against all danger; these are times for combat, not for flight. If any good can be done nowadays, it is by means of a holy activity, a Christian courage; we must fight against our enemies with their own weapons. Allow

me to say, further, that if in former days people could apply themselves to one virtue in particular, they must now exhibit proofs of every virtue and leave no weak points. Grace is engrafted on nature, making use of its progress to shine with new light, and it would seem that the present development of the human race tends to make virtue more complete and solid; and in consequence of this certain dangers, such as that of dignities, become less. External dignities, for instance, cannot make such an impression on the senses of a holy, learned man as on one who is simple and ignorant; the first has a thousand reasons, even humanly speaking, to make him despise them, the second has only his piety to help him. On the other hand the world has become so disdainful and difficult to please that I think the only means of effecting any good is to confront it with the very ministry of Jesus Christ, which alone is divine and invincible.

But this ministry, you repeat, is full of danger.—On this very account, it seems to me, does it need greater helps and precautions. Which is the greater charity, that which devotes itself to protecting those states of life which are comparatively speaking free from danger, or that which provides props and support for the most dangerous? If all dignities could be removed from the world many dangers to human frailty would certainly disappear. But if these dignities must exist, if they are so necessary that we should not have the Church of Jesus Christ without them, what can we do but find out the best means of sanctifying them? And how shall we succeed better than by educating the future ministers of the Church in the sanctity of religious life, aye, religious life in its sternest and most rigorous form? The time spent in preparation would be long, and they would not be exposed to the trial until they had given abundant proof of true humility and self-abjection.

You will answer that this will be obtained if the Institute assists such persons and co-operates in the formation of *worthy ministers of the Sanctuary*, without itself

assuming the ministry.—It is my belief that the spirit of pride is exceedingly subtle and penetrates where one would least expect to find it. If religious who have no parochial work are set to train and instruct the parish priests there is the danger that these good religious may fancy themselves to be above the parochial clergy, and under a show of outward humility may cherish a subtle pride, a thing which I dread far more than all external dignities. In fact I have already come across something of the kind. I know a house of excellent religious who are frequently employed in giving retreats to the clergy, examining them for faculties, &c., and I must say their humility has seemed to me greatly endangered, the Evil One appearing to succeed well in suggestions of vainglory and self-complacency. It appears to me an anomaly to find a simple religious, set over a number of parish priests and appointed to instruct and preach to them. If we have attained such fortitude and perfection as not to fear these interior temptations, exterior ones will scarcely be formidable. And as I have mentioned this subject, let me make another remark. It seldom happens that these good religious have any experience of the world; nor are they sufficiently learned. As far as their own perfection is concerned, a stainless life is sufficient; but in order to instruct others they require some proficiency in learning and a thorough knowledge of the world. The latter cannot be gathered from books: it is acquired only by experience in the sacred ministry. The duties of the ministry are a school to the priest, because he is continually occupied in a two-fold study, of the heart of man and of the state of the world he is seeking to amend. If you do not take the world as it is, you can do no good in it except by miracle; nay, you cannot even train others to do good in it. The *prudence* with which charity is exercised is the great necessity; but this can only be gained by experience. I would therefore sanctify this prudence and enable the parish priests, whose sole art consists in the *prudence of charity*, to have the means of acquiring it without danger.

This prudence could not be imparted to them by those who are simply religious. Moreover, the lack of experience produces in religious a certain disdain for whatever does not come within their sphere, and of which they do not appreciate the importance. This again produces a certain awkwardness which repels men of the world.—Lastly, I do not deny that these good religious may perhaps train parish priests; but how much more suitable and conformable to the institution of Jesus Christ it would be for the parish priests to train the religious! If pride consists in soaring through self-esteem above one's station, it seems to me far more dangerous for the religious to train the priest, than the priest the religious. And ought we not to believe that the commission given by Jesus Christ to the priest must be a powerful defence against all dangers?

You justly remark that ecclesiastical dignities must necessarily have proved more dangerous to those Orders whose object it was to lead a hidden and private life than to an Order which by its very constitution admitted these dignities. Moreover, the spirit of the Institute on which I have set my heart (because such seems to be the will of God) has in view not only the *humility of the individual members*, who neither dispose of themselves nor are responsible for the decision of their superiors, but also the *humility of the entire body* (an important point in my estimation). The Institute as such takes a contemplative form, making choice only of the duties of prayer and study: it undertakes labours of charity only at the request and entreaties of those in need. Every precaution should be taken to preserve this lowly spirit, seeing that nearly all religious communities speedily develop what is known in the world as *esprit de corps*, which we should rather term a certain limitation arising from secret pride, a complacency in the *Society*, which re-acts however on the members. Hence is diminished that charity which seeks to unite all men in one body, how varied soever are their connections and differences. If you enter into this thought you will understand the delight I take in your

remark that the new Congregation must *bud forth on Calvary between Jesus Christ Crucified and Our Lady of Sorrows*, provided we remember that Christ is there fulfilling the highest pastoral duty, by dying for the sheep, and that He is exercising the highest prerogative in the Church, that prerogative which unites in one and the same person the Priest and the Victim acceptable to the Father, the source of all the prerogatives and of the entire ministry of Holy Church.

Forgive the liberty I am taking, if I beg you to reflect well on this important matter from which so much good may result to the Church provided that what we propose be written in the divine decrees. Believe me, even the religious who of his own free will flies from the world, would not be acting in a spirit of perfection, if he refused to leave the delightful silence of the cloister when called forth by the voice of charity to assist his brethren. Perfect abandonment of the world should in our times be made *in spirit*, after the manner of the Apostles; and we should not be satisfied with a mere external flight. I am well aware that the most agreeable life is that withdrawn from this miserable and dangerous world; but let us seek always that which is most pleasing to God and useful for His glory. Let us live *with our heart in solitude*, but let us not refuse to leave it with the body when the voice of the Superior, which should be for us as the voice of God, calls us. He who sends us will strengthen us. Excuse the length of my letter and attribute it to my desire for the increase of God's glory.

A. R.

IV.

TO DON GASPARO BERTONI AT VERONA.

He sends him the Plan of the Society of Charity.

Milan,

March 15th, 1826.

Though I have already taken up so much of your valuable time by the visit I paid you in person, allow me to address you further by letter. My only motive in writing is to obtain the benefit of your enlightened counsel. You are already aware of the great desire which I have for some time entertained (placed by God in my heart I trust) of living in a religious community with some priests, and you have encouraged me in this design. Now, before beginning anything, I think of asking the advice of the Holy Father, lest the whole thing be an illusion to be dismissed at once, which, however, I do not believe in my heart. I have therefore sketched out the general idea, and shall be glad to know what you think of it.

There will of course be some difficulty in making a start; but at the beginning we need not adhere closely to the rule of strict retirement nor wait for demands to be made upon our services. We might at first (should God send us some good companions) establish ourselves near some church where we could assist in the services on Sundays and festivals, attend the confessionals and perhaps open a school which would justify our position in the eyes of the public. With regard to all this I should like to have your opinion and hope you will be prepared to give us your assistance should you think the inspiration to be from God.

A. R.

Plan of a Society for Priests dedicated to Charity.

I. This Society is composed of priests who unite together with the two-fold object of sanctifying themselves in that state in which the Divine Mercy has placed them and of co-operating in charitable labours for the succour of their fellow men in their spiritual and corporal necessities. They consecrate their union to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ crucified for us in the excess of His love, and to Mary Most Holy, the Queen of Martyrs, and to all the Saints.

II. They believe, moreover, that these two objects can be best attained by two different modes of action. They choose forthwith by their own election and rule the first and the first only, which is the attainment of their own sanctification by means of acts of the love of God, interior mortification and complete self sacrifice. They place themselves of their own choice in a state of profound and uninterrupted recollection, adding, however, to their prayer and contemplation the study of things human and divine.

III. They do not propose to recite the Divine Office solemnly in choir, on account of the duties of charity of which mention will be made; nevertheless they will recite the Office in common as far as possible.

IV. They propose not to bind themselves by solemn vows but only by the three simple vows, adding, however, a fourth of absolute obedience to the Roman Pontiff.

V. The state of profound recollection is chosen not only for its own sake, but as a *state of preparation* for the duties of charity to which they may perchance be called by God.

VI. This Association of Priests, like all other Societies, consists necessarily of Superiors and Subjects.

The Subjects, being bound by vow to obey their Superiors, must be ready to yield entire obedience to all their lawful commands. A genuine vocation to the Society of Charity implies a sincere intention of becoming indifferent to anything that may be required by obedience, be it pleasant or unpleasant, honourable or humiliating,

advantageous or prejudicial to their temporal interests; obedience must be the soul of all. This annihilation of self, or rather conformity of one's own will to that of a Superior's must extend also to all works of charity. A great desire of exercising charity in every way possible, even to the shedding of one's blood, after the example of Christ Crucified, should indeed be entertained, but it must always be subject to the law of perfect obedience; and amongst all possible works of charity those enjoined by obedience are to be preferred. By reason of this indifference which is extended to all works of charity, the Fathers *do not confine themselves by rule to any particular kind of work*, for they are ready to undertake all that is commanded. Hence it is left to the judgment of Superiors to select at different times certain labours rather than others, and to limit or extend them according to the intentions and needs of the Church of Jesus Christ, whose glory must ever be present to their mind and heart.

This Congregation of Priests must have in view not *its own advantage* but only the general good of Holy Church, without seeking in any way the interests of its members or even of the Congregation itself in preference to those of the Church. Special regulations will be made to exclude from the Society any spirit less universal than the spirit of the whole Church.

As regards the Superiors who are entrusted with the maintenance of discipline and the government of the Congregation, and who must assign to each individual his special work of charity, they will be guided by the following rules: (1) In accordance with the spirit of recollection and of preparation which should distinguish this Congregation, the Superiors will watch over the observance of constant retirement, silence, prayer and study, which last must be directed to the general good of the Church. (2) They must listen readily to the request of their neighbour. (3) They must not reject any *application for their charitable aid*, but by means of the members of the Congregation minister, as far as it is in their power, to the wants

of their neighbour thus made known to them. These requests may chance, however, to be so numerous and of such a nature that they cannot all be complied with at the same time. In such cases the Superiors will arrange everything prudently according to the *order of charity*. This order of charity comprises three points: (1) The more or less *perfect manner* in which the work of charity can be accomplished; (2) The *preservation* of the Institute; and (3) The *intrinsic excellence* of the work.

As regards the first, Superiors must not undertake works of charity which cannot be properly carried out on account of the fewness or incapacity of their subjects; for when a work is beyond the strength of the persons to whom it is entrusted it produces little or no good result, and perhaps even disedification, and it is detrimental to the members themselves. Superiors ought carefully to ascertain the measure of each one's strength and adapt the burden accordingly.

As for the second consideration, that of the preservation of the Institute, this is a matter of the greatest importance since, as we have said above, the Institute does not confine itself to any work of charity, or to speak more accurately, there is no work which does not come within its range. It is therefore not at variance with the spirit of the Institute that its members should for motives of charity be sent to reside at a distance from their common home. It must however be borne in mind that such separation might notably weaken the bond between them. On this account great caution will be required at the commencement in accepting permanent responsibilities involving separation from the community, and we must avoid such occupations as are likely to diminish the mutual union which, please God, must be allowed to strike deep root. This is the more important because there should always be a well-grounded hope that a work once begun will not have to be abandoned.

Finally, the Superiors who undertake and assign labours of charity must take into consideration the intrinsic excel-

lence of the work in question, and be guided by certain fixed rules. The chief of these is: to give the preference to the duties of the ministry instituted by Jesus Christ in the Church, since these contain the most fundamental, or rather the root and germ of all possible duties of Christian Charity. The Superiors of the Congregation show this preference to the duties of the ministry (except when the two former considerations require them to act otherwise) for this reason also, that the Fathers of Charity are thus enabled to follow more closely Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and High Priest, whose example they profess to imitate. Moreover the Congregation desires in all its labours of charity to be founded on the *divine mission*, well knowing the riches of grace which Jesus Christ communicates to those whom He sends to propagate the fruits of His divine charity among men; and it wishes to do nothing of itself, but everything in accordance with the known will of God.

Hence, the method on which the Society is regulated, is that of imitating as far as possible the divine institution of the Church as founded by Jesus Christ, from the moment at least in which the Congregation undertakes the care of souls and then emerges from the hidden and retired life which is its state of predilection. For it is desirable that the offices of the government of the Congregation and the care of souls should always be united in one and the same person. If then a Father of Charity be appointed to take charge of a parish, he is both parish priest and Superior of the Congregation established or to be established in that parish, keeping distinct however the rights belonging to the two offices. The superiors of the single houses existing in different parishes (for there may never be two independent houses in the same parish) are dependent on the Superior residing in the Cathedral city, and so on.

These Fathers of Charity, though bound to absolute poverty in their relation with Superiors, may hold property in the eyes of the law and have civil rights as individuals, but never as members of a Congregation.

Before taking any steps to form such an association it is felt to be absolutely necessary to submit the project to the Roman Pontiff, in order to ascertain whether its realization be for any reason unadvisable, or else to be reassured and encouraged by the Apostolic Benediction to commence the work in accordance with the will of God, as soon as a suitable opportunity presents itself.

OBSERVATIONS

on the nature of the Society of Charity and the possibility of combining with it any good and useful Institution.

The general tendency of the Society of Charity is to promote the closest possible union among good Christians, and strengthen the ties of Christian fellowship, so that the members of this association, thus closely united, may have a keener consciousness of their dignity and greatness as Christians. Thus they will be encouraged to live united with one another and with their visible head, the Roman Pontiff, and with their invisible head, Jesus Christ, so that the Society of Christians on earth may be strengthened against the children of the world. It is the writer's deep conviction that Christian Society is being constantly, though secretly, impelled in this direction by the spirit of Jesus Christ which animates and guides the Church.

The writer is also persuaded that Christian Society, by reason of its tendency to acquire this union and strength is being drawn nearer to that perfect model which Jesus Christ had in view in founding the Church; that He so constituted her that, by means of the organization bestowed on her, the entire society of mankind may gradually acquire greater and still greater regularity and perfection even in its external relations.

The bonds of union established by Jesus Christ in the beginning were certainly perfect, but they were wholly spiritual. He left these spiritual forces to produce, like fruitful germs, in the course of ages their infallible effect

even on temporal things, and to regulate and sanctify all things according to His word: *When I shall be lifted up from the earth I will draw all things to myself.*

The design, therefore, of Divine Providence during the time allotted to the Church's conflict on earth, is to draw all things, even what appertains to the exterior of society, successively into subjection to Jesus Christ, and thus to bring all things into harmony in Christian Society, giving to all their proper place therein. Thus will be realized the good order which completes the entire and perfect organization of the Church, which began, as we have said, with a spiritual union, the germ and root whence life must increase and develop in trunk and branch, aye, even to the tiniest twig and leaf.

In order that we may see how all human things must find their place in the Church and be subjected therein to the spiritual bonds devised by Jesus Christ, adjusting themselves so harmoniously that human society may finally attain perfection, we must inquire what are these spiritual bonds which constitute the organization of Christian Society or of the Church of Jesus Christ.

These bonds are the ecclesiastical authorities, and especially the Pope, the Bishops and the Parish Priests.

Hence the Society of Charity, intended to assist in this development of the Church of Jesus Christ, has nothing else in view but these three principal grades of authority; and all the efforts of the Society are directed to bringing merely human institutions into subjection to these authorities (always however in due measure and as far as the nature of these institutions may allow). All of them may well be designated *works of charity*, for every action of a Christian should be but an expression of his love towards God and his neighbour, since mutual love is the distinguishing badge given by Christ to the members of His Society.

The writer is of opinion that human institutions can have but a precarious and fortuitous existence until such time as they are transformed in the way described into

genuine works of charity, and, what is more, duly incorporated into the Church by subordination to the three grades of central authority, the Pope, the Bishops and the Parish Priests.

It is for this reason that the Society does not refuse to undertake these same works of Charity and that all can find a fitting place in her, provided that their connection with her be directed to the end of the Society. On this condition the undertaking of these works would seem likely to contribute both to the welfare of the Society of Charity and to the consolidation, extension and duration of the works themselves. Hence those good Christians who take part in the association, do at the same time co-operate in the very work designed by Jesus Christ, that of reducing all things human to regularity and bringing human society into a state of perfect order. All this moreover will be done quietly and without attracting notice (*sine observatione*), and as a natural consequence of the spiritual principles of the Gospel and of the condition of the Church as established by Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATION

regarding the order observed by the Superiors of the Brothers of Charity in making the selection among the works of charity required of them.

It has been said above that the *order of charity* (with respect to the present subject) has reference chiefly to three things, 1st, the *degree of perfection* with which the work of charity may be accomplished; 2nd the *preservation* of the Institute; and 3rd, the *intrinsic excellence* of the work itself. With regard to the last of these it has been said that the chief rule is to give the preference to the duties of the sacred ministry, as containing the most fundamental charity or rather the root and germ of all possible duties of charity.

It will be well to explain here what is meant by *intrinsic excellence of the work*. By this term we understand not only the greater advantage that may accrue to

men from the work, but also the perfection of the work as a means of promoting the divine glory, in accordance with the spirit of the Congregation, which has for its object its own sanctification and the glory of God. Now the ecclesiastical ministry is conducive both to God's glory and to the welfare of men, for the Priest's first duty is to offer the sacrifice of the Immaculate Lamb, the centre and source of all perfect devotion, adoration and glory, to God; and his second duty is to sacrifice himself for the salvation of his flock, because the *good shepherd layeth down his life for his sheep*. This self-sacrifice includes every act of charity that may contribute to the welfare of the flock. The state of the pastor of souls is therefore a most perfect state.

But with regard to other acts and offices of charity, the spirit of the Congregation seems to tend by preference towards the work of caring for the poor of Jesus Christ, honouring in them the image of the Divine Master. This inclination, which the Congregation cannot but feel, to make the poor the object of its delight and tender solicitude, is due, in the first place, to the fact that Jesus Christ has commended the poor to our care with those solemn words which will form the substance of the Judgment passed on Christians at the last day. Moreover, this tenderness and solicitude for the poor must characterise the Congregation of Brothers of Charity for this reason also, that the spirit of the Congregation should be a spirit of perfect poverty; and since the Brothers are really poor in virtue of their profession, it is right that they should associate and converse with the poorest and most abject of men, who are in the same condition as themselves. This intercourse would assist to preserve the spirit of detachment, and would be all the more useful because it is possible that the members of the Congregation, being ready to the best of their ability to assist their neighbour in any way whatever, may in time have to mix with the higher classes of society with great danger to their poverty of spirit and their attachment to the life of contempt and penury chosen by our Saviour and His perfect disciples. Hence a work

promising a wide influence should not always be chosen without hesitation in preference to works of charity to the poor. On the contrary, it should only be undertaken when the demands of benevolence to the poor have been satisfied, or at least when the Congregation has in hand such a number of works of charity towards the poorest of the poor as will keep it in connection with those whom our Lord has commended to our care and who most nearly resemble the Congregation of Brothers of Charity.

Finally, the Congregation entertains a special predilection for *children* who have been commended to us by our Lord with these words: *Suffer little children to come unto Me*; and amongst their charitable works a special place is assigned to the education of the children of the poor.

V.

TO HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CAPPELLARI.

He asks the Cardinal's advice with regard to the proposed Society of Charity.

Milan,

April 23rd, 1826.

I must beg your Eminence to pardon me for disturbing you again. My object in writing now is to solicit your prudent counsel with regard to the matter treated of in the enclosed manuscript.* Certain thoughts, suggested to me by a holy person, have for some time past occupied my mind; but I cannot feel sure that they come from God until I have had an opinion from some one in authority. Were such an opinion favourable I should desire to consult the Holy Father himself. I earnestly beg of your Eminence to be so kind as to assist me with your advice, first with regard to the general idea of the proposed association, and then again, if need be, as regards the details.

If your Eminence were to advise me to abandon this idea I should not hesitate a moment to dismiss it from my mind. If you require further explanation you have only to let me know. Were I encouraged by your favourable opinion I should decide on going to Rome, in order to obtain greater light and to ascertain what further steps it may be proper or necessary to take. I address myself to you not as to one placed in a lofty station, but simply as to one whose kindness and indulgence I have so often experienced. For this reason I do not hesitate to open my mind to you, in order that, before taking further action, I may know your private and confidential opinion.

Your Eminence's humble and obedient servant.

A. R.

* The Plan of the Society of Charity mentioned in Letters VI. and VII.

VI.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK.

He sends him the Plan of the proposed Society.

Milan,

June 16th, 1827.

My dear friend and Brother in Christ,

I hasten to send you a plan of the Institute to which God seems to call me. Read it, think it over, take counsel with our Lord about it. What a consolation it would be if you received a similar call! The mercy of God would thus *hasten the times*. I should never have believed that the moment of giving effect to my vocation was so near at hand; but if your wishes coincide with my aspirations I shall look upon it as a sign from our Lord that His hour is come. Well do I know what awaits me : *but how am I straitened until it be accomplished!*

I beg of you to meditate attentively on what I have set before you, and to try your spirit, in order to ascertain whether it is the same as mine. I repeat what I have said; if we are agreed I am ready to begin at once. As I told you in conversation, one obstacle in my way was the book I am engaged in writing, in compliance, as I believe, with God's will. But having taken further counsel with our Lord, I perceive that this impediment is not such as to induce the postponement of the design set forth in my letter, as soon as a fitting opportunity occurs. An opportunity offered by God must never be neglected, and I must therefore manage to reconcile my literary labours with my occupations in the new Society.

The principal *end* of the proposed Congregation is, as you will see, to form the priest upon the model of Jesus Christ. Nothing found in that model should be excluded.

We shall place before us, and keep before our minds as fully and perfectly as possible this ideal of the Priesthood, and consequently the ideal of the greatest sacrifice. We would fain say, *For them also do I sanctify myself* in closest union with the great High Priest. This implies perfect sanctity even to the shedding of our blood if need be!

The place in which you propose to commence the work appears admirably suited for the purpose. It would seem as though Providence had prepared it for us. *How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways!* The loving-kindness of God draws its threads from afar, joining and crossing and weaving them together to form the tissue pre-ordained *a constitutione mundi*. My dear brother in Jesus Christ, I bid you farewell in *osculo sancto*. Let Mary be our mother, that we may ask our Lord to look on the children of His handmaid. May we seek only the glory of Jesus Christ in all things! So be it. *Amen in saeculum*. Pray for your unworthy brother in Jesus Christ.

A. R.

VII.

TO THE SAME.

Answer to objections.

Milan,

June 25th, 1827.

Your ardour, my dear Brother in Jesus Christ, consoles and encourages me; and I look upon it as a new token of our Lord's will. I am ready, as I have told you. For the present, however, it is impossible for us to join forces. Some preliminaries must be observed of which the principal are these. We must make further trial of our spirit by taking counsel with God in prayer, and with each other in writing so as to make sure that we are of the same mind, moved by one and the same spirit. Then we must seek the Holy Father's blessing in order that we may be in close union with the Church from the very outset, an essential feature of the institution. In the meantime we shall be united in spirit even if we do not see each other, and shall pray the God of mercies to bring us together when and as it shall please Him.

Let us now continue our correspondence; it will prepare the way for the Constitutions, which we shall draw up together, as soon as we are able to meet and confer together *in Domino*.

The difficulties presented by § 12, as you have stated very clearly, are chiefly two: 1st that evil results would ensue if the Superior of the Society, being charged also with the pastoral office, were to grow cold in charity and give bad example: 2nd that this might *easily* happen, since he would be obliged to divide his affections between

the Society and the people, and thus be in danger of neglecting the one for the sake of the other.

I hope that a clearer explanation of my meaning in § 12 will remove both difficulties.

With regard to the *first* we should take notice that a special characteristic of the Society must be *prudence* in undertaking works of charity, and the Constitutions must lay stress on this point.

I say that this prudence is a special characteristic of the proposed Society, inasmuch as it does not confine itself to any particular branch of charity, but without binding itself to any, applies itself to one or to another according to the judgment of Superiors; so that on the prudence of Superiors, guided by certain definite rules, all the good result of the labours of the Society depends. The Society therefore does not bind itself to undertake the pastoral office as a matter of course, but it accepts this responsibility with mature circumspection in those cases in which it is judged advisable, namely, when the Society really possesses a trustworthy subject to whom the double charge of Superior and pastor may be confided without risk and with the moral certainty of a good result. So long as such a person is not available, or the Superior conscientiously believes he has no such subject, the Society is not bound to undertake the pastoral office, nay, it is bound not to undertake it. Observe, however, that the Society may in time have such subjects; indeed, this is probable considering the long preparation required of the members, the long novitiate and course of studies, the life of recollection, of silence and of strict discipline, and finally the distinction between the Presbyters and the Coadjutors; which enables the Society to admit none but men of rare excellence into the highest class, and hence to enact in the Constitutions that Superiors and pastors be taken exclusively from that class. I propose moreover to set down in the Constitutions that the pastoral office may be undertaken by those only who have entered on their thirtieth year. It may be hoped that a man

of that age will be sufficiently formed by means of the discipline of the Society; and that the best of those thus matured and trained may be considered capable of sustaining the two-fold responsibility of Superiors and pastors with the aid of the Divine Mercy. From this prudence and caution you will perceive that the government of the Society rests on two principles. The first is that *the Superiors must act with full freedom according to the rules*, as they deem best in conscience before the Lord without being influenced by any authority or motive external to the Society. The second is that *the Society must desire, not to achieve great things, but to do well the little it does*. Hence it must do nothing by constraint but only undertake what it can well accomplish; because, having a generous and munificent Master, it must hold for certain that He furnishes generously and abundantly the requisite means for doing His holy will, and if the means of accomplishing any particular work are wanting it is evident that we are not called to that work.

With regard to the *second difficulty*, namely, that the Superior who is at the same time pastor of souls may be in danger of neglecting the Society for his flock, or the flock for the Society, I answer thus.

The love entertained for the Institute by a Superior may be inordinate in two ways, through *excess* or through *defect*. There may be *defect*; but this is obviated by the various rules specially designed to foster love for our Institute. Nothing is so admirably calculated to obtain this end as the rules of St. Ignatius. There is also the disorder which springs from *excess*. Now a religious Institute, considered in itself, cannot be loved too much, for within its own sphere it is worthy of infinite love, and the more perfect a religious is the more he loves his Institute. The disorder of excess is relative to the Church, that is to say, a religious falls into excess when he loves his Institute more than the Church or not in due subordination to the Church. This may easily happen, indeed it often does so without the religious himself being aware of it, for it is a fault

invariably covered with the mantle of sanctity. Hence it is that the world reproaches religious orders with their *esprit de corps*, for this tends to corrupt them and in course of time to transform them into factions, so that they end by seeking above all their own advantage instead of aiming at and working for the general good of the Church even with the sacrifice of themselves. This fault is greatly exaggerated by the world, but nevertheless there is some truth in the allegation; and certainly it is a disorder which must grieve all who love the Church of Jesus Christ, who rejoice in their Lord's gains and are sorry for His losses. What we can never love too much, either relatively or absolutely, is the Church of Jesus Christ, that sheep-fold, those sheep for which the God-Man shed His blood, saying that the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. Therefore it is out of love for the Church that the religious should love his Institute: the Church is his final end; and the rule upon which he should model his affection is the shepherd's love for his sheep. The religious who follows this rule will never love his own Congregation inordinately, so as really to love himself rather than the Society; he will never separate himself from the charity of Christ to suit his own interests, but being united with the Prince of Pastors he will love his Congregation in loving the Church, the sheep-fold and the sheep. Thus in those houses to which the care of souls is attached the Superior of the Society is also to be the pastor, for this combination of the two offices will maintain the equilibrium between the two affections for the Church and for the Society, and each will stand in its proper relation to the other. The Superior is like Abraham who looks on Agar as a servant precisely because Sara is his wife. It was the free-woman who brought the slave to the holy patriarch. Abraham did not choose Agar for his spouse. If he had had no other wife than Agar she would have been mistress of the house, but, Sara being already the wife, Agar is kept in her natural subjection and servitude, and is even dismissed

when Ismael cannot live with Isaac. The pastor of souls who is at the same time a religious, recognizes the Church for his spouse and his own Congregation as the handmaid who must be kept in subjection to her mistress. All religious orders should be the handmaids of the Church; as such they are no longer the work of man but of God, that is, of Christ the Founder of the Church. This must be the predominant idea, particularly of an Institute devoted to the exercise of charity: everything must be subordinate to the authority of the Church, lest haply the Church some day be dependent on a body which she does not control.

You will perceive that this way of thinking is not a novelty, on the contrary, such has always been the spirit and desire of the Church. St. Augustine when a Bishop lived in community with the religious whom he had established in accordance with this spirit, and he was himself their Superior. St. Eusebius founded a similar institution at Vercelli. Of him we read that "he was the first in the West to choose the same persons to be monks and clerics in the same Church; so that they might unite contempt of worldly goods with the carefulness of Levites." At that time, as you know, the clergy were attached to the Churches either as parish priests or as assistants. At a later period, another Bishop, St. Norbert, established his Congregation of Premonstratensian Canons with the same object in view. In fact the work has been repeatedly commenced or revived by holy men in different places. I own that it would be difficult to maintain for any length of time a general rule that all parish priests should be religious or *vice versa* that all religious Superiors should be parish priests; and perhaps it was because the rule would be too general that the custom could not long be maintained in the Church. But precisely for this reason our discipline upholds no such general rule, it prescribes on the contrary that such a combination should be made only in certain cases, in which the

prudence of superiors may decide that such and such a member of the Society can be deputed to the double office with the moral certainty of a good result. To God alone it pertains to send persons who are fitted for such difficult employments. Only by degrees and in God's good time may we hope to see that restoration of ancient usage which seems most desirable but which can only be the work of the Divine Head of the Church.

Even though the affections of the religious should be in part diverted from the Society and given to his flock, the Congregation will not suffer: first, because our Lord for whose sheep the religious is labouring will provide for us; secondly, because he who loves the good of his sheep cannot but love the Society in so far as it is a means of furthering their salvation; and finally, because in our Society the gradation of subjects and superiors will always culminate in a Superior General, who in his turn will be subject to the Supreme Pastor of the Church, on whom finally depends the universal good of the Society.

In this way the Society will be the better able to maintain itself in humility; for as one of its principal occupations would be that of giving retreats to the secular clergy or in other words of instructing the very pastors of the Church there would be great danger of vain glory creeping in, if the Society were composed of priests not engaged in parochial work. When those who are in an inferior position are called upon to instruct their superiors, it is almost impossible that they should not be tempted to pride; nor can they speak with freedom, because there is always some danger of overstepping the limits of modesty. This is not the case when the speaker has received a special mission from Christ and is in possession of the pastoral dignity; and even though the priests giving the retreat do not themselves hold this office, it is well that they should belong to a Society which employs some of its members at least in parochial work.

Lastly, let us put our trust in Jesus Christ. Let us confine ourselves to the mission He gives us, and find in it the source of our courage; from it let us expect grace and strength. This mission is the glory of the pastors of the Church; and shall we neglect it? Will not our religious feel more confidence in their Superior when he is also a pastor of souls with a mission from God? Will he not bear a closer resemblance to Jesus Christ? Will not the Society be able to hope for a more intimate union with our Lord?

Pray write and tell me what you think on this subject after having taken counsel with our Lord in prayer. We shall see whether these arguments make the same impression on you as they do on me. You will understand that the conjunction of the pastoral office with that of superiors in the Society is so characteristic a feature of the Institute I have long had in my mind, that without it, it would be no longer the same Institute in all its perfection, but another.

Before sending this letter I shall show it to our excellent friend Count Mellerio, who wishes to be remembered to you. I have great confidence in him, and hope that as you say he will be, nay that he is already an instrument for good in our Lord's hands.

I am glad you find the place near Domodossola so well adapted for our purpose; the description I have received makes me think the same. Much as I desire to see it I must wait a little longer.

I embrace you, my dear friend and brother, in Jesus Christ, in whom it is sweet to die. May Mary obtain for us this grace!

A. R.

VIII.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He proposes they should spend Lent together in prayer.

Milan,

July 6th, 1827.

My dear friend and Brother in Jesus Christ,

Perhaps you have never received the long letter I sent you in which I replied to the objection you had raised. I feel sure that we shall be of one mind in the Lord, and this confidence leads me now to propose something more definite. You are quite right: "the spirit of the Lord will have no delays;" but have patience with my natural coldness and slowness. I will now tell you what are my plans. In the course of a few days (within the month I hope) I shall be with you. This will be a short visit to see you, to see the place, to make arrangements and begin our preparations. In Lent I shall come to Domodossola permanently; we will spend the 20th of February, Ash Wednesday, together in fasting and prayer. From the very outset Jesus must be our Exemplar in the work which He alone can bring to perfection. I shall probably bring a companion with me, and we shall be the better able to comfort and support one another with the words: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst."

O happy mountain-solitude where we shall be united in prayer and in the fast of the Lord! He will then teach us all things and remind us of what we have heard from the Church, all those truths which would remain as though dead and forgotten were they not quickened into life by

the Paraclete, whom the Father sends in the name of His Son.

Lent will be the best time for writing the *Constitutions* according to the pattern which will be shown us *on the Mount*; and if we have not finished by Easter we can prolong the time till Whitsuntide. Many things have already been made known to me; you will see and judge if they be from the Lord. I should be an unfaithful servant were I to speak otherwise or to deviate from my course.

It is not merely natural coldness of disposition, it is also fear of doing wrong that makes me slow in setting about things; I do not wish to be *beforehand with God*; neither should I desire to be tardy in following His will. But I fear the first defect far more than the second. The Lord is good and has often called the Saints as many as three times, urging them on with goads too sharp for resistance. Surely He who devised language for man knows how to speak; He who has made babes eloquent can render His own utterance clear and effective.

Let us employ the seven months that will elapse before February 20th, in listening to the voice of God and making more and more certain of our holy vocation. I shall make arrangements for disposing of part of my worldly substance. You might with advantage devote some of your time to the study of Italian, and thus make our intercourse easier. I have written all this in the expectation of speedily receiving the necessary permission from my Superiors. May Jesus Christ be praised for ever!

Your affectionate brother,

A. R.

IX.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He recommends prudence in speaking of the projected Institute, which should be founded in all humility and simplicity.

Milan,

August 9th, 1827.

I am afraid that your temperament, a little too ardent perhaps, has prevented your observing that prudence which I recommended so earnestly, and of which we have so much need. My dear friend, let me speak freely to you, let me tell you all. It has come to my knowledge that you have been a little imprudent in speaking of your hopes to some friend of yours, and that you have said things which have no foundation whatever, and which even if they had should be kept secret. I do not believe that you wished to deceive any one, for I know you to be perfectly sincere; but I cannot help thinking you have deceived yourself and converted some fair idol of your imagination into a reality. For heaven's sake let us be cautious and prudent, and let us say rather less than more, especially of what may appear favourable to our undertaking. This is a matter of the utmost importance. Any indiscretion, in speaking or writing, may do immense mischief to the work which God seems to require at our hands, and for this we should have to render an account to Him. Every imprudence we are guilty of, may gain for us the title of unfaithful servant—*serve nequam*—which God forbid!

I am so deeply persuaded of this and consider it of so great importance, not only for the happy result of our undertaking but also for the salvation of our souls, that I deem it well to explain to you more clearly the spirit according to which I have always desired to regulate my

conduct, the spirit which must animate our Society should it please God to send us companions.

This spirit springs from a profound conviction that we are nothing and can do nothing; that all our natural powers are incapable of effecting even the least thing pleasing to God and beneficial to our own souls or to those of our neighbours, much less to the advancement of the Church of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Head of the Church, is He who alone and unaided does everything. He has no need of anyone: indeed so jealous is He of His glory that He invariably puts to confusion those who imagine that they can of themselves accomplish anything for His glory or for His Church. In consequence of this intimate persuasion the Christian not only should not think himself necessary, but should consider himself, as he truly is, an "unprofitable servant." Therefore he should not and cannot feel any anxious desire to do great things; nor should he play the part of an adventurer in the service of God, as he might do when seeking to make a name for himself in the world.

With regard to the vicissitudes of the Church we should remain in perfect tranquillity, knowing that Jesus Christ still lives, that to Him all power is given in heaven and on earth, and that nothing happens that is not ordained for His greater glory and more complete triumph. What then remains for the Christian to do? To work out his own salvation, to purify his conscience, to grieve over his sins, to acknowledge his weakness, to recognize his own nothingness, to pray and let himself be consumed in the fire of divine love. And with regard to labouring for the good of his neighbour and the Church, what shall he do? Let him remain in peace and wait for the Divine call. The Christian, fully conscious as he is of his own nothingness and utter incapacity for great things, knows also that God can make use even of his nothingness if such be His good pleasure. He must therefore, wait patiently, in case the Divine Mercy should deign some day to use him as an instrument, in order that the glory of God may shine forth in

his infirmities. Not knowing anything of the Divine intentions and good pleasure in his regard, he must, in imitation of Our Lady, await their manifestation. But he must not forestall the Divine decrees. It may be that God will not make use of him, and in this case he will remain tranquil and content in obscurity. It may be that God will call him, and then, abasing himself more profoundly than ever at the sight of the greatness of the Divine Mercy, he will yield himself up with docility to the Divine guidance that he may be an instrument in God's hands

How will he recognize the Divine call, the Divine will? Chiefly by means of external circumstances. The principal rule for their interpretation is derived from the conviction that God "orders all things sweetly." Therefore the Christian seeks nothing, nor does he refuse anything; he rejects none of the occasions that present themselves for doing good. His work is done quietly without violent effort, because he is simply guided by circumstances. All that he does, he endeavours to do as perfectly as possible. For the rest he does not burden himself by undertaking labours that are not required of him by his actual circumstances. He has no solicitude for the future. The one thing which he seeks at all times with all the energy of his soul is his own interior sanctification: the sincere yielding up of himself into the hands of God, setting no limits to His grace and leaving Him to do with him as he pleases.—What is the outcome of this spirit? What are the maxims we must adopt for our guidance? They are as follows:

1. We must entertain but one absolute desire, that of having a pure conscience and of living in calmness and peace as in the hands of God.

2. We must do good according to our actual circumstances, adoring the Divine Goodness that places us in them without desiring any change in our condition; for God alone knows what is good and what harmful to us.

3. With regard to the future, our duty is *negative*.

We must set no limit on our part to the Divine Goodness; we must not place impediments in the way of that good which God will perhaps have us to do; but at the same time we should not form calculations of our own with regard to the future nor anticipate the Divine will with our plans. Much less may we indulge in day dreams that would be considered extravagant even according to the surmises of human prudence, for in this way we should not be acting according to the *spirit of truth*, and everything not conformable to this spirit is *from the Evil One*; let us be simple, let us be sincere. *Simplicity* makes us embrace the present good, without giving a thought to any other. *Sincerity* will only permit us to speak of what we know and what our Lord wishes us to know. Let us not aspire to do great things, but simply to do what our Lord would have us do.

To apply this to our own case: what are we going to do, my friend? Nothing more than to make a retreat of forty days, nothing more than to observe the Lenten fast together after the example of our Divine Master. This we know, or at least we expect it because it is a thing close at hand and circumstances appear favourable to its accomplishment. Do we know more than this? Nothing which we are in a position to communicate to others. Let us then be content and not speak about things of which we are not certain. If we were to die to-morrow we should leave nothing unfinished, for we are fulfilling God's will moment by moment. If we talk of what we are going to do in the future, God will punish us for having been unmindful of His words. Perhaps before Lent is past God will require more of us; when that moment comes it will be time enough to speak about it. Far from us be all human artifice, all exaggeration; we have no need of such means, since we wish to do that only for which other means are provided by God. "Purge out the old leaven. . . . Let us feast not with the old leaven nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Let us be simple as doves: "all things

are naked and open to His eyes." Let us not act impulsively and of our own accord ; let us not deceive ourselves with vain hopes nor anticipate the will of God even in our desire to please Him. Let us abandon ourselves to the care of Providence, but not as though we had a right to receive that which is gratuitous bounty. God's Providence is generous, nay it surpasses all generosity, but it is not on that account subservient to our opinions ; these should rather be formed in accordance with His liberality.

This is the spirit to which I have always desired and still desire to conform myself ; this should be the spirit of our Society as it is common to all good Christians. It is a calm and temperate spirit, springing from charity and founded on the knowledge of our own nothingness.

My dear brother, we agreed, at our last interview, to suggest to each other subjects for our daily meditations. I would suggest that you should meditate on this spirit, the right understanding of which is so important. I expect you in return to propose something to me, and if you will add a brotherly reproof for some defect you have observed in me whilst we were together, you will confer a great benefit on me. Meanwhile think over what I have said, and be prudent in speaking or writing *to your friends* ; and be especially careful not to give expression to hopes about the future which rest on no foundation ; such want of reserve would be contrary to the spirit of truth, of simplicity and of confidence in Divine Providence. Besides it can do us no good and may do great harm. As I feel sure you will have the kindness to take for your meditation the subject I have proposed, I hope you will communicate to me such reflections as may occur to you on the same. This correspondence will be most useful because it will help us to know each other thoroughly. I beg of you to open your whole heart to me. You are speaking to one who greatly esteems and loves you in the Lord. Have no doubts. Let us humble ourselves in the Lord, and do you pray to Him in behalf of your unworthy friend,

A. R.

X.

TO THE SAME.

On the same subject.

Milan,

August 16th, 1827.

Let us trust in God, and hold fast to the maxim explained in my last letter, to which I am anxiously awaiting your reply. Let us not take the least step which is not founded in the prudence and truth of the Lord. I repeat, let us not be ambitious of doing great things, nor worry ourselves about the future. Let it be the Lord who leads us, nay, who urges us forward at every step; so that we move not a foot without having reason to hope that it is not man who acts but Jesus Christ in man. Happy shall we be if we walk thus cautiously! Thus do we die to ourselves, provided that our life be hidden with Jesus Christ, in God. "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

I love you sincerely, my dear friend in the Lord: peace patience, longanimity! We know not what we are doing nor even what we are asking for. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." In what, then, can we put our confidence? Listen to what follows. "But the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." And again: "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth, because He asketh for the saints according to God. This therefore is our duty: to allow the Holy Spirit to pray in us "according to God," for our sanctification. God who searches hearts will do the rest if He finds us well disposed. He will show us what we ought to do, and withal the way, time and place. Then we shall act with full understanding, for God will have made the light to shine upon us, and we shall no longer do anything of ourselves, but God will do all in us. To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

A. R.

XI.

TO HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CAPELLARI AT ROME.

He asks the Cardinal for the assistance of his counsel and prayers.

Milan,

August 17th, 1827.

Availing myself of the opportunity presented by the visit of my friend, Count Giovanni Padulli, to the capital of the Christian world, I take the liberty of offering to your Eminence the first volume of my philosophical treatises, recently published.

Following your advice, I have earnestly recommended the affair of the Institute to the prayers of devout persons, in order that if the project comes from God, He may Himself accomplish it by means of His servants. It is a great consolation to me to reflect that I have remained passive throughout, and have not taken a single step without being, I may say, compelled to do so by the manifest will of God. But indeed I could not act otherwise, for I feel myself incapable of anything and shrink greatly from what is in store for me if the work is indeed ordained of God. Padulli will be able to give you further particulars by word of mouth, for he is one of the very few who know anything of the affair.

I hope your Eminence, will for my instruction and consolation, favour me with your opinion on the two MSS. which I have forwarded. I have great confidence in your Eminence and foresee that the work will be more yours than mine. See how importunate I am: yet by reason of my passivity I am slow to do anything if others do not move me. Meanwhile I beg your Eminence to assist me with your prayers.

Your Eminence's humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

XII.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Answer to the objection that the scope of the Institute is too wide and indeterminate.

Rovereto,

August 24th, 1827.

My dear Brother in Jesus Christ to whom be all honour and glory for ever.

I will now reply to the remarks made in your last letter with regard to the *extension* of the Institute. They are quite correct, and I have always held the same opinion myself. But you will perceive that, by the grace of God, the Institute will be furnished with all the means that human prudence can suggest for maintaining its primitive spirit among the members. Since it is the last of all religious congregations in order of time, it will be able to profit by the experience of those that have preceded it, and to combine all those means of self-preservation which the Holy Ghost has distributed amongst them. Just as the man who has the greatest number of enemies has most need of support, so at a time when the faith is attacked on all sides there should arise in its defence a Society armed at all points. Of course we must never cease to dread the natural proneness to evil of the men who compose the Society, for no one can be sure of himself; in proof of which God has allowed the religious orders to deviate more or less from their primitive spirit, in order that no flesh should glory in His sight. No human Society is incorruptible, save only the Church of Jesus

Christ, in virtue of a special favour which He obtained from His Father with a "strong cry and with tears." Therefore the Church is the work of God and not of man, it alone is founded on the Divine Word, which is the firmament of the spiritual universe, as it is written: "heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass away." Apart from this inherent weakness, as we do not rely on human prudence, I trust that God will give us the light necessary to make the Institute sufficiently strong and furnished with the means of preserving itself in our Lord and in His Holy Spirit for the time to come.

I am not surprised that the scheme should appear somewhat vague and indeterminate, for I have not had time to explain everything as minutely as I intend to do. You will then see that this indefiniteness exists only in theory; in practice it is sufficiently restricted to ensure solidity. The Institute might be defined in a few words as follows: "An Institute in which the members especially the priests, endeavour to perform with the utmost perfection all the duties of their state so as to be an example to others, and strive on that account to attain to the highest degree of holiness. And since charity towards their fellow men (directed by the prudence of the Gospel) is an element of their own sanctification, they perform works of charity in due order. Consequently they should promote in the first place the sanctification of priests, inasmuch as this work is the highest form of charity." Meanwhile we shall lead together a life of prayer and study, these two duties being comprised in the choice made of the interior life. And to what will our study be directed? Under the prudent guidance of superiors we shall try to acquire a profound knowledge of our sacerdotal state, with a view to imparting this knowledge to others. Should a superior, for instance, see amongst us members qualified to give spiritual retreats, he will bid them prepare themselves for this employment, in order to contribute in this way to the sanctification of the clergy.

But it is impossible for me to express myself clearly in

a letter without writing a treatise. It is therefore better for us to remain for the present in tranquillity of spirit and to persevere in prayer, abandoning ourselves without reserve to the care of Providence and following the light which God gives us. Do not hesitate, but apply yourself to the work with perfect tranquillity of mind. I long to be with you. How good God is to us! Let us praise and extol Him for ever, because "He is good and His mercy abideth for ever." I eagerly expect to hear from you.

A. R.

XIII.

TO COUNT GIACOMO MELLERIO AT MILAN.

On the necessity of being humble in time of prosperity.

Rovereto,

August 30th, 1827.

Thanks for all you have done; and this will not be the last time I shall have to thank you, for I always avail myself of your friendship. I am very glad of the permission granted by the Archbishop; our friend sent me a copy of his letter. All the rest, so far, goes on smoothly, on wheels as you say. So much the greater need is there to "work out our salvation in fear and trembling." The trials have not come yet; God will be thus tender with us as long as we are spiritually infants. Knowing this to be His way of dealing with souls, prosperity should make us humble.

However, whilst we humble ourselves, let us also rejoice, and with free and open hearts (for we are free) enjoy God's gifts without thinking of aught else. *Eat those things that are set before you, think not of the morrow; let us continue always in the giving of thanks.* Surely the thought of being the children of so good a God should afford us great consolation. Even if we do wrong He is not exacting or magisterial as men are, He looks at the heart only, and readily forgives us for "we have an Advocate with the Father." "In spirit and in truth": these words contain the law of Christians. Let us not impose intolerable burdens upon ourselves, but be humble and offer ourselves to our Lord that He may do with us what we have not been able to do ourselves. Verily He alone makes

the yoke sweet and the burden light; of ourselves we cannot lift a straw from the ground. I have said this for my own consolation; because it is a pleasure to speak of these things with my friends, with friends to whom as I know the voice of the Lord is not new nor His words unwelcome. I commend myself as usual to your prayers and my friend joins me in doing so.

A. R.

XIV.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK.

Sentiments of humility and diffidence. On the Spiritual Exercises.

Rovereto,

August 31st, 1827.

It was only yesterday that I received your two letters. Thanks be to God that you are in such perfect agreement with me! This has been a fresh proof that my hopes were well founded, and I am glad that I have not misunderstood you. Be assured that I have the most sincere esteem and affection for you, and that I consider myself unworthy to be your servant. One thing which I greatly desire, and ask of the Lord, is that we may never trust in ourselves for any success, or never take one step without having consulted the Lord, "for all flesh is grass and the glory thereof as the flower of the field."

I see from your letter that you are well aware that every man is imperfect, and that I myself am so in particular. This gives me great courage and confidence, for I trust that you will be disposed to bear with me and my innumerable faults. I have great need of your forbearance and I beg you, for the love of Christ, not to deny it to me, for I am naturally weak and it gives me much consolation to see that my brethren bear with me.

I am occupied at present in studying carefully St. Ignatius' book, the "Spiritual Exercises." The more I meditate on this work the greater does it appear to me, and I hope that it will be of as great use to us as it was to the newly-founded Society of St. Ignatius, being most efficacious in gaining the heart to virtue, and even to the highest

perfection. If these Exercises no longer produce such great results as formerly, it is perhaps because the method prescribed by that man of God, who was profoundly versed in spiritual things, is no longer adhered to as faithfully as it used to be, and, as in everything else, innovations are introduced through a presumptuous desire of doing better. The consequence is that the exercises have become so ineffectual that they no longer produce the fruit which can be obtained by adhering to the rigorous method of the Saint.

Let us persevere in prayer, by means of which we shall obtain all things through Christ. I am constantly thinking about our association, and though my health is very weak and my infirmities numerous, I fear nothing. I take great delight in those words which you quote in your letter: For when I am weak then I am strong. Then indeed we hope in God, when we feel that we have nothing to rely on in ourselves. We have need of experience. The knowledge acquired by the mind alone is too cold and inefficacious without that experimental science, which was possessed by the Saints and by Christ Himself, according to the Apostle: "He learned obedience from the things which he suffered." Let us live, no longer we, but let Jesus Christ live in us. May He accomplish in us all that He gives us to know, and may He give us to know all that He desires to the end that the Kingdom of His Father may come into our hearts.

A. R.

XV.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK, AT DOMODOSSOLA.

External circumstances are a manifestation of God's will.

Rovereto,

September 24th, 1827.

I have received your kind letters, but delayed answering them because I saw that everything was going on well, and I did not like to multiply letters without necessity. Thanks be to our Lord for the supply of water that has been found. I am glad to hear from yourself and my friend that the men are at work. God be praised !

Here I am constantly occupied with our affairs. God grant that my efforts may contribute to our spiritual advancement, which is the true foundation of everything. To-morrow I am going to meet the Bishop of Trent who is coming here on a visit. I cannot do less than ask his blessing on the work before he leaves us, but this will be in strict secrecy. I also expect shortly a friend in whom I have great confidence, the Bishop of Treviso. But let our trust be in God alone. The favour of men never gives me encouragement without at the same time alarming me. Unhappy should I be if I trusted to that ! God grant that I may die rather than trust in man or human things. I beg of you to implore of God the grace to hope only in Him, and to see in external circumstances only so many manifestations of His will. Let us attach no importance to them in themselves just as we attach none to the voice or writing of a King, but only to his will as expressed by such signs. Thus we shall abandon ourselves entirely to Providence, without offending by presumption or by temerity ; for we have a definite

rule to follow, namely, that *external circumstances are signs of the Divine will*. Hence, when these signs are wanting, we remain in the contemplative state, and thence (not of our own will but guided by these manifestations) we pass prudently into the active state, as I have explained in the short Latin description of the Society. This, it seems to me, is the way to peace and tranquillity: this is the sure way either to put to silence what St. Peter styles *the ignorance of imprudent men* or to bear with gladness those persecutions to which we have not given occasion, and which are therefore really "for justice' sake."

I am longing to embrace you and am looking forward to that 20th day of February which is to find us together. God grant that it may be all for His glory. God grant that we really come together in His name, so that the ground of our hope may be these words of our Lord: "I say to you that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven." Let us meet in God. May we be one in Christ as Christ and His Father are one. O ineffable unity! O desirable consummation! May our Lord, the consuming fire, consume our sacrifice. He will accept it if it comes from the heart, if it is complete.

Your unworthy servant and friend,

A. R.

XVI.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the poverty to be observed in the Institute of Charity.

Rovereto,

September 29th, 1827.

Your letter of the 15th inst., just received, shows that you are somewhat anxious on account of my silence. Although your mind must have been set at rest by the letter I have already written, nevertheless I hasten to send this to corroborate the other. Have no doubts, my dear brother in Jesus Christ. Assuredly you would neither hesitate nor imagine the possibility of any coldness on my part if you knew how much I love you and how I appreciate all your cares and labours. Though they are borne for your neighbour they still appear to me as though done for myself alone.

I am full of ardour, my dear friend, but at the same time I am feeble. However, God will strengthen me. After all the only reason why I have been remiss in the correspondence between us is that, I am reluctant to multiply letters without necessity, since the less we write the better perhaps for the secrecy of our affairs. In fact there was really nothing requiring an answer. I hope you will bear this in mind, for the same thing may occur again, and I should not like you to take it as a sign that my affection for you has diminished or that I have lost interest in the matter we both have so much at heart, but only that I have not thought it necessary to write immediately or have been too busy.

Ah! how I long to be with you! I doubt not that we are one in spirit: may this be God's work. Let us trust

in Him alone, let us abandon ourselves to Him without presuming on His goodness. External circumstances should be to us symbols wherewith to interpret His holy will. Let us not do our own will, but His, and do it in all peace, tranquillity and patience. We have need of patience, and that is the virtue which Christ has taught us by His life and by His death.

I have been thinking about the furniture, which must be in keeping with the poverty we intend to profess. For this purpose I have written a few short rules for the practice of poverty in exterior things. I hope you will examine them in order to see if what I have laid down is calculated to obtain our object. If these rules meet with your approval they may be of use to you in the selection of furniture for the house, in order that everything around us may suggest contempt of wordly comfort and produce edification. There should be nothing to divert our mind from the contemplation of God, or to occupy our hearts, which should be full of God alone.

From these few rules you will perceive that in my opinion the greatest possible poverty ought to be observed in the house and in its furniture, especially in our cells. The principle on which this opinion is based is expressed in the first rule: "It is very profitable for us, on looking round, to see everywhere an extreme poverty of ornament, in order to remind us that naked we were born and that naked we must return to Christ; but at the same time nothing should be wanting which may be either instructive or helpful to the perfection of our souls." We should not be subjected to excessive privations, whether voluntary or prescribed by rule, because our entire being must be sacrificed in the exercise of charity; therefore nature should not be deprived of the strength which should be spent in charity. This is why I have said: "there should not be too great a scarcity of *conveniences*, but there must be no *ornament*." By *conveniences* I do not understand those things which help us *to be idle*, but those which help us *to do more*, for *conveniences*

are of two kinds. For the same reason I do not think it advisable to prescribe any corporal austerities to be practised by rule, but only to provide that those enjoined by the Church be well and devoutly observed. I leave it, however, for each one to do what his own spirit suggests to him (with the approval of his confessor or superior) provided that he does not diminish his strength; this should be all spent in the love of God by the exercise of *prayer* proper to the state of election, and in the love of his neighbour by the *charitable offices* undertaken at his neighbour's request and assigned to him by his superior, which forms the second state of the Society. I will only add that I desire to embrace you in the Lord, in whom I pray that we may be made perfect in unity.

A. R.

XVII.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK, AT PARIS.

*He exhorts his friend to put his trust in the goodness of God
and to despatch his business quickly so as to return free
from all earthly ties.*

Milan,

December 12th, 1827.

You have done well to write, to me, my dear brother and friend in Jesus Christ, though you were unable to give me that good news which would have been welcome to us both. But no news could give me so much consolation and comfort as to see that you abandon yourself into the hands of Divine Providence. What can we fear when we put our trust in God? He chastises us at one time that He may be able to console us at another, the time pre-ordained by Himself. Alike in chastisement as in comfort He seeks only the greater good of us, His poor, miserable creatures. When I think of the goodness of God, which ever remains the same in all the varied ways in which He treats us, I am no longer terrified even by my sins, and sinner as I am, I abandon myself into His hands as into a safe refuge, an ark of security and deliverance. Take courage then, my dear brother and friend. In all that befalls you I seem to see the loving hand of Jesus. By means of these tribulations He is teaching and training you for His high and merciful designs. I trust in Him, that He will bring you out of all your difficulties, and that we shall praise Him together for justifying you even in the sight of men before you put your hand to His work: "that he who is on the contrary part may be afraid,

having no evil to say of us." To this end I will not fail during the Holy Sacrifice to beseech God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all His good pleasure may be accomplished in us and in all mankind. Our good friends, to whose prayers you recommend yourself, will do the same.

Write as soon as possible and let us know all that happens. Do not abandon yourself too much to your own reflections, lest intensity of thought should impair your health. Leave everything to our Lord, who consoles the afflicted and repairs the mistakes of those who seek His protection. Do not weary yourself with over-anxious thoughts: He will lovingly suggest the course you ought to take. Let your conduct be always characterized by the simplicity and prudence of His spirit avoiding all human artifice, trickery or dissimulation. Free yourself entirely from all your embarrassments, and even prolong your stay if necessary, in order to return quite free from them and ready to "exhort your brethren in sound doctrine." How I long for the moment of our meeting! Do not forget the 20th of February! How happy we shall be on that day!

For some time I have been ailing somewhat, but I am not afraid, "neither do I count my life more precious than myself, so that I may consummate my course." May our mother, Mary most holy, obtain for us that we may finish our course happily. I embrace you in the Lord who lives and reigns for ever. *In osculo sancto.*

A. R.

XVIII.

TO GIOVANNI PADULLI AT ROME.

He speaks of his desire to visit Rome, and begs for prayers especially during the coming Lent.

Milan,

December 21st, 1827.

The letter you were kind enough to write to me from Rome gave me real pleasure. Heaven indeed showers blessings upon you in the good dispositions of your sons, and I trust that you will receive abundant comfort from them. You mention one very good sign in your letter, their natural preference for good companions. Pray remember me kindly to them and assure them of my affection and sympathy and the interest I take in their true happiness, that namely which is the fruit and reward of virtue.

You are right in saying that our affair, or rather our Lord's affair, should not be discussed by letter but by word of mouth. I am so persuaded of this that I think the time must be approaching when I shall be able to visit Rome, the capital of the Christian world; that noble city which has long been the object of my aspirations, the centre, as it seems to me, of all my dearest hopes on earth. But these hopes should not be earthly and, please God, they will not be. Let us then persevere in prayer; this I most earnestly beg you to do. Beg our Divine Lord and His most dear Mother to be pleased to diffuse light amid our darkness, to give strength to our feebleness, to the end that we may know how to accomplish His holy will. We do not indeed need light with regard to embracing the state of perfect life. He has already enlightened us on this point; He has given us the counsel in the Gospel,

may more, He has addressed to us all this loving invitation: "Be ye therefore perfect as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." Surely we have no need of more light, when our Lord has spoken to us so clearly. Rather let us sincerely divest ourselves of all our affections and in poverty and nudity let us follow our Master whose poverty was such that He had not where to lay His head.

But how are we to tread this sacred path which Jesus trod? We must unceasingly beg Him to make this known to us by that light which gently and efficaciously attracts the hearts of those to whom it is vouchsafed. Dear friend, whom I love in our Lord, have no fear. We wish for nothing save the good pleasure of God, and therefore we shall have our hearts' desire. Let us abandon ourselves to Him, that He may deign to mould us as the potter does his clay. God loves us: He was the first to love us: this is the unshaken foundation of our confidence. It seems to me that the time when our Lord will, as I hope, grant to us great and abundant light, is destined to be the coming season of Lent. I beg you to unite yourself in spirit with us during that time. In imitation of our Lord's fast for forty days, we too shall begin with penance. I desire, if God grants me this grace, to spend Lent in solitude with a friend. When this period of seclusion is ended, I shall be able to decide whether I am to go to Rome, should nothing unforeseen occur to prevent it, and I shall be able to let you know something for certain. I trust that our dear friends, especially Mellerio and Polidori will help us during that holy season to obtain the Divine assistance; and I should like to beg them to join us in our prayers.

Lately I have been far from well. I suffer from a complaint of the liver and have been spitting blood. But by the grace of God I do not fear these sufferings. May He grant me grace to say this always. Indeed, if the truth must be spoken, if ever I had reason for believing that our work will be successful, I think I have it now in my infirmities. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world." If

I had a robust constitution it would very likely foster that confidence in my own strength to which I am so prone. Woe to me, were I to fall into that snare. But to find myself good for nothing and to be, for the present at least, incapable even of study—which was the one thing for which I had a particular attraction—to be unable to speak or to read or to write; all this makes me like a stock or a stone which our Lord may make such use of as He pleases. If there were nothing else, the consciousness of the precarious tenure of life, the feeling that we are on the very brink of eternity, is indeed a sort of happiness and consolation, because it helps one to be always watchful, and heightens the joy of waiting for the Spouse. How it makes us realize the uselessness of creatures! Under other circumstances an incredible blindness might make us think ourselves necessary to the Church of Jesus Christ. The weakness of the body dispels such an illusion. Were I to die and leave the work unfinished, it would not of necessity be shipwrecked or even hindered. Who knows whether my removal might not hasten it on, and increase it? Who knows but that I may be an obstacle to its accomplishment? It may be that my sins retard the outpouring of the Divine mercies upon the Church. Long ago I offered the sacrifice of my life in union with that of Jesus Christ, and I renew this offering every time I approach the Altar, asking our Heavenly Father to cast this second Jonah into the sea without mercy, if thereby he can calm the storm. But I am not sure that God has accepted the victim. So far I do not think He has.

A. R.

XIX.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LOWENBRUCK, AT PARIS.

He draws motive of confidence from their ill-health.

Milan,

January 30th, 1828.

I only received to-day your kind letter of Dec. 24th, and am answering by return of post. My dear friend in Christ, do you really think I left you without a letter because I had changed my intention in your regard? If this had been the case, I should have informed you at once and never have allowed you to be agitated by a doubt both tormenting and harmful.

As for your ailments you have told me clearly what they are, and I quite understand. But take heart, my beloved friend. In the midst of the sadness which they cause me (for it is impossible not to share in the troubles of a friend), I am greatly pleased by the way in which you speak of them. You bless God for them and simply desire to do His Adorable Will; you are ready to bear all the humiliations and sufferings our Lord sends you, even though they should last a life-time. Blessed be God for these excellent dispositions, which are His gift! Let us never tire of rendering thanks to Him for all things, let us never tire of saying: "It is good for me that thou hast humbled me." Let us offer ourselves to God without reserve, but above all let us give Him our thoughts and our plans, that He may destroy and bring to naught whatever in them is human or our own. Let us be content, if it so please Him, to remain stupid and senseless all our life and unable to think or act. Let us be content provided that we of our free choice offer Him this sacrifice of all our powers,

because our very inaction, our very helplessness is sanctified and made dear to Him by this first sacrifice.

In our case it is needful that man should do nothing, but that God should do all in man; that He should bring to naught all our plans, in order to reconstruct, to create all anew, according to His good pleasure, in us or in others of His servants. Ah! there is nothing sweeter than to feel ourselves deficient in all that appears great and worthy of esteem, so that in our utter abasement, annihilation and foolishness, the power of Jesus Christ may be displayed and that it alone may make all things new. My dear brother, the extreme discouragement you feel at times and this weakness of head (the most humiliating of all tribulations, sin only excepted) make you know yourself. Henceforth you will not doubt that the thoughts of men are but vain and their scheming futile. You will reject that false confidence in yourself which corrupt nature is ever ready to awaken, but which must be crushed and destroyed in order that the glory of Divine grace may shine in us, and that henceforth we may no longer live for ourselves but that Jesus may live in us. The opinions which your Paris doctors have given you will keep us in holy diffidence, and render us more fit to receive encouragement from the Lord. You are ill: so am I, though my health is now improving. Would it not be worthy of God and in harmony with His judgments and His mercies of old, to choose for the accomplishment of some great design, two men, one of whom had lost his wits and the other his voice? In this case you would be the blind man carrying the lame.

What conclusion shall we draw from all this? My plan is this, that we should spend Lent together at Domodosola and that during this time we should pray and take counsel together and beg of our Lord the light we need for our final deliberations, wherein we must do not our own but His Will. The air of Monte Calvario will, I trust, do you good. In any case there is no question of your staying there permanently, but merely of passing forty or fifty days there by way of trial. Do not imagine, dear

friend, that we shall spend these days in excessive austerity and sadness. No, we shall spend Lent as sick men do; the Lord will accept our ailments in lieu of more grievous penance. How good and compassionate He is to us! No mother could bestow on us more loving care. Nay, He is infinitely more tender than the best of mothers. Come then if you think fit, if your spirit prompts you to do so, that you may be here on February 20th. I long to embrace you on that day.

Do not doubt of my affection. I should be delighted to be able to relieve or comfort you in any way, and will not fail, with God's help, to bestow on you all the care that charity may suggest. The exercise of mutual forbearance will make us gentle towards others and impart that spirit of holy discretion in which we must draw up the rules of the Society we may be called upon to establish.

I conclude by embracing you in our Lord, to whom alone be glory for ever. May our Mother, Mary, obtain for us the grace to give the greatest possible glory to our Lord.

Write to me, if only a few lines, as soon as you receive this letter, for I shall be anxious to know that it has reached you. "Fear not little flock. If any man seems to be wise let him become foolish that he may be wise. All flesh is as grass and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field."

A. R.

XX.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK, AT DRAGUIGNAN.

His arrival at Monte Calvario.

Calvario, Domodossola,

February 19th, 1828.

My dear friend and Brother in Christ,

Here I am waiting for you at the place appointed. I have been beforehand with you, and feel quite pleased with myself for having outdone you for once in diligence, a virtue in which you are usually so far superior to me. Come, hasten: I am longing to see you. We shall spend Lent together in remembrance of our Lord's fasting during forty days for our sake. Temptations will come later on, but fasting and praying will then have given us strength to resist them all. They have already been vanquished by Him, who though He was God willed to be tempted. He willed it in order that by His one victory He might subdue all our temptations. *Take courage and be strong.* This is the critical moment. All times are in the hand of God and He disposes them according to His eternal decree. I am here. Our former arrangement still holds good. "He that putteth his hand to the plough, &c."—these few words are enough. Let us not yield as though we were conquered before the battle, but persevere unto the end. Love me in our Lord to whom be glory for ever and ever.

A.R.

XXI.

TO SAMUELE BIAVA AT MILAN.

A description of Monte Calvario.

Calvario,

March 7th, 1828.

Permit me to address you in a tone of confidence and friendship. Your goodness and my gratitude—two things which draw men together and make them equal—give me a right to do so.

I am very well off here. This place is quite romantic, more than romantic, as you say. I live on summit of a hill, close, to a ruined castle, which reminds me of the scene of St. Anthony's temptations. Chapels dedicated to the mysteries of the Passion are built on the hill side: half-way down is a humble Capuchin monastery. The summit represents Mount Calvary. The air is sufficiently mild, and to my fancy the situation has a certain importance by reason of its proximity to three nations. But, my dear Biava, it is not the imagination that I am seeking to gratify. I have come rather for the purpose of purifying my soul from the defilement of the world. But this cannot be done without the aid of Divine grace. Pray therefore for me that I may humble myself sufficiently to obtain this, grace, which visits and consoles the humble. I become ever more deeply convinced that "this is all man;" and that all who are destined for eternal happiness must come back here, must come to the Cross, to Calvary.

Write to me about your work, your views on education, your hymns, about everything in fact, for I am interested in all that concerns you.

A. R.

XXII.

TO GIOVANNI BOSELLI AND FRANCESCO BONETTI
AT MILAN,

He exhorts them to seek only the will of God and their own sanctification.

Calvario,

St. Joseph's Day, 1828.

To my dear friends in our Lord, Giovanni Boselli, Priest, and Francesco Bonetti, grace and peace!

I enclose a letter for the kind friend whom we revere as a mother, the Marchesa di Canossa.

I trust that you have remembered me in your holy sacrifices and prayers, as on my part I have not failed to commend you to the goodness of God. The season of Lent which we are spending in memory of our Lord's fast is now well advanced. I did not write to you because I did not wish to multiply letters without necessity, and writing seemed superfluous as we were so united in heart. May our Lord replenish you with His peace and joy during these days of penance. I believe that He will not leave His servants in ignorance of His Divine will, provided at least that they seek it with simplicity and fulfil it with gladness. I desire nothing else, and indeed there is no other good than this. It will be a great pleasure to me to know what your thoughts are on this subject. Whatever we do, we should do thoroughly without looking back: otherwise it would be better left undone. Let our heart be right before God, and let us never tire of humbling and purifying ourselves. We must think of correcting ourselves first and other people afterwards. Let our reproofs be for ourselves alone, without envying the happiness and much less the laxity of others.

My companion has not yet arrived. I am busy fitting up this house, which has become very dear to me. May the Lord be the bond of our union.

A. R.

XXIII.

TO THE MARCHESA DI CANOSSA AT VERONA.

He informs her of the result of an interview with the Bishop of Trent.

Calvario,

St. Joseph's Day, 1828.

I owe you a letter, and come, though late, to pay my debt. You are always so ready to forgive me that I have formed the habit of claiming your indulgence. The chief thing of which I am anxious to inform you is the way I obtained permission from the Bishop of Trent to set out for Milan, a permission most courteously granted.

Not wishing to leave the diocese without his consent I took advantage of his invitation to accept some permanent employment in his diocese to address him as follows: "If your Lordship considers such a thing desirable you have only to command me, and I promise not only to obey, but to obey with pleasure. But if you leave the matter to my own judgment I must say that I do not think it is the will of God. In the first place, I do not feel that I have the strength, moral or even physical, requisite for undertaking the charge of souls or the government of the Seminary [which he had offered me]. Secondly, were I to accept such a post I should be obliged to set aside the occupation in which I have been engaged for years, and whereby, with God's blessing, I hope to do good in a wider sphere. If, then, your lordship does not wish to command me, but allows me to be guided by my own deep conviction, I purpose to devote myself to two objects. First, I wish to revive to the utmost of my power the study of Philosophy, since the neglect of this science

has led to the decadence of Theology, with grievous detriment to Religion, which, chiefly on that account, is so ill-defended from the fierce attacks made against her in our own times. Secondly, when opportunity offers, I desire to carry out a project suggested to me by the Marchesa di Canossa. This is the establishment of a community of men similar to her Institute of Daughters of Charity, though I should increase the branches of charity in which these religious men might be employed. Madame di Canossa communicated her plan to the Empress of Austria, who has warmly encouraged her to carry it into effect. I should therefore be inclined to further her design, but only in so far as Providence may give me the occasion of so doing. Moreover, in order to give your lordship a proof of my sincere attachment to the diocese, I would in due time obtain from my sister the establishment of S. Maria, formerly a Carmelite monastery, at Rovereto, and restore it to the service of God by devoting it to the work I have mentioned."

The Bishop seemed pleased with what I said, and gave me full permission to go to Milan, where I told him there were greater facilities for the study of Philosophy. I did not go further into the subject and did not tell the Bishop I was thinking of becoming one of the religious in question; I only spoke of lending assistance when opportunity might present itself. When you go to Trent I shall be grateful if you will speak in the same strain and as God may inspire you.

Another matter which I must not fail to mention is the present state of our affairs. As you know, it was arranged that the Abbé Löwenbruck and I should spend Lent here together, and that then we should with mature deliberation lay the foundation of our work. The French priest, however, has not been able to come and is still in France. I am therefore without other companions than a priest and two laymen, but I am delighted with this solitude. God has restored me to health, and all my time is spent in meditating on His will and listening to His voice. You

are already aware that one of my rules of conduct is the abandonment of myself to Providence, and so I am determined with God's grace, to remain in tranquil expectation of His decrees, without refusing anything He may give me to do in His service. Meanwhile, I am attending to the preparations needful in the house, which is so happily situated for a commencement on "Calvary," on the "rock." You will hear more of our doings from my good friends, Boselli and Bonetti. I beg and conjure you for the love of Christ to assist me with your prayers and your counsel. Write and tell me all you think about this matter: I will try to make good use of your advice.

A. R.

XXIV.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK.

He urges his friend to come to Calvario.

Calvario,

February 26th, 1828.

My dear friend and brother in Christ, why do you not come? Why do you delay? Was it not you who with the vehemence of your zeal hastened the time for beginning the work I had in mind? Was it not your ardour that enkindled my zeal? And yet I have been here a whole week and you are not to be seen. Wherever I look I see no signs of my friend. What shall I do without you on whom, in the Lord, I rest so many hopes? On the first day of this month I wrote to you at the address you gave me at Draguignan, but I do not know whether the letter reached you or shared the fate of those sent to Paris. Immediately after my arrival, I wrote again to remind you of our agreement to spend Lent together in retirement in remembrance of our Lord's fast. I know nothing of the fate of this letter either, but perhaps it is too soon to expect an answer. However that may be, the desire of seeing you join me as soon as possible induces me to send another letter by a different route, hoping to baffle the wiles of the Evil Spirit who seems to be using all his arts to hinder our union. Come then and defeat the enemy. Our Lord has already conquered him, so let us be of good courage and be careful not to yield our ground in a conflict where the victory is assured. I trust you will not delay even one day in putting your things together and setting out to join your friend, who is waiting for you on the Mount of Calvary. Addio.

A. R.

XXV.

TO COUNT GIACOMO MELLERIO AT MILAN.

*On tranquillity in time of suspense and on confidence in the
prayers of good men.*

Monte Calvario, Domodossola,
February 29th, 1828.

What a charm there is in this name *Mount Calvary*! If you are touched by reading it, I feel infinite pleasure in writing it. Everything goes on well and our Lord treats us as a father does his children. We want for nothing, and are certainly better off than the solitaries of Egypt who depended on their palm tree for clothing and for food. The sky is bright and clear after the fall of snow which covered the ground to the depth of some inches, but was not accompanied by excessive cold. The Canon is very kind to us and was much gratified on receiving your good wishes which he cordially reciprocated. The Cardinal of Novara has replied with great courtesy to my letter informing him of my arrival, and he assures me that he will be always ready to assist me to realize the objects I have in view.

Only our friend, the French priest, is slow in coming. I have not even heard from him. However, that which God has ordained will be accomplished in all things; indeed what God has ordained from the foundation of the world is the only thing desirable, the only good, whether it seems so to us or not, for we are ill qualified to distinguish good from evil. I am therefore not merely tranquil but even content with regard to my companion's delay; the pleasure of meeting will be all the greater on account

of the long expectation. Sometimes our Lord keeps us waiting for His favours in order to increase our appreciation of them, and to give us a fuller knowledge of His loving kindness. He uses all the artifices of love.

Tell Don Polidori that I said Mass at the "Holy House"* according to his intention. I only received Don Giovanni's letter this morning, though it bears the date of the 30th of January. That letter gives me a glimpse of the beauty of his soul, which is all for God! I am filled with shame on hearing such persons call me master. Amongst other things he says: "How I should like to be with you and listen to your delightful conversations with Mellerio." What would he say if he knew we hold intercourse only by letter? However he will soon know, for I am going to write to him. I have more confidence in the prayers of such as he than in all the power of man, and I am deeply grateful to those who thus persevere with one mind in prayer in behalf of God's Holy Church.

The good Giulio also writes that he offered Holy Communion for me on the day of my departure. Our Lord will certainly not be outdone in generosity. But what am I saying? Can there be true generosity except in God? However He will create in us all that He desires to effect, provided we do not resist Him; indeed so generous is He that He sometimes deigns to overcome our resistance. May He subdue us wholly to His Will! May He reduce us to naught, because it is out of nothingness that He draws His creatures, and He delights in the gracious triumph of His Omnipotence! May we be lost, as it were, in Him, and our life be hidden, invisible!

A. R.

* The "Holy House" here alluded to is situated on Monte Calvario and is an exact fac-simile of the Holy House of Loretto.

XXVI.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK.

He again urges his friend to come to Calvario.

Calvario,

March 5th, 1828.

For the last sixteen days I have remained here in eager expectation of your coming, my dearest friend and brother in Jesus Christ. I do not even know whether you have received my letters. A suspicion sometimes crosses my mind that possibly you have allowed yourself to be overcome by pusillanimity and discouragement. If it be so I conjure you to rouse yourself, my friend. Remember the mercies of the Lord, take the shield of faith, and come to Calvary, where death and the evil spirit were vanquished for ever. In charity to your own soul, do not make our Lord's passion to be of no effect, and do not look back after once setting your hand to the plough. If, as I would fain hope, this is not the case, why do you delay? What is keeping you? Why not write at least? I obeyed your words as though they came from God, and am come here at your instance. Will you now abandon me after urging me to undertake a work to which I felt myself unequal? Nay, make haste and come. If you do not I shall say: *I will hope in the Lord and shall not be confounded.* But I shall also add, *because vain is the help of man.* Even when you do come I shall continue to use these words, aye, all my life long if God grant me the grace. May He be with us for ever.

Your friend,

A. R.

XXVII.

TO CARDINAL MOROZZO, BISHOP OF NOVARA.

*He speaks of the steps taken towards the foundation of the
Institute of Charity.*

Calvario,

May 28th, 1828.

Your Eminence,

My reason for not writing sooner to give your Eminence positive information concerning my projects with regard to the "Sacred Mount" was merely my own state of uncertainty.

Now that your Eminence questions me on the subject I will reply with the frankness due to you, and will begin by giving you some particulars regarding myself, in order that you may be fully acquainted with the facts of the case.

At first through natural inclination and later on by reflection, I have acted on the principle of seeking no occupation of my own accord, and at the same time of refusing none which might present itself, provided it was not beyond my strength: looking on those opportunities of doing good which might present themselves, as invitations of Divine Providence, which it would not be right to resist. In the absence of external occupations, prayer and study sufficed to banish idleness.

Some years ago, while I was in this frame of mind, the Marchesa di Canossa, who is well known for her piety and the institutions she has founded, wrote me a letter in which she communicated to me her plan of establishing an Institute of *Brothers of Charity*, closely resembling, in spirit at least, the congregation of the Daughters of Charity which she has established with such beneficial results in the provinces of Lombardy and Venice, and

will establish before long in the Tyrol. I took her plan into consideration and raised several difficulties concerning it, some of which I have subsequently perceived to be groundless. Since then we have always been in correspondence on the subject. In 1825, if I remember rightly, on the occasion of answering a letter from the Marchesa, a certain extension of her project, which I have never forgotten, occurred to my mind, and it seemed to me a thing willed by God, though I knew not by whom or with what means it would be carried into effect.

So far, humanly speaking, these were but thoughts and words, for I did not know whether it was God's will I should take the initiative either by my assistance or by personal participation. On the other hand I would not take any step without being urged on by someone else, and no occasion of making a beginning occurred spontaneously, so that there was little likelihood of the work being accomplished.

In 1826, I had occasion to go to Milan, where I remained till last February. There I continued my studies, but the long-cherished hope never left me, and I had determined on the course I should adopt if certain events took place. The friendship and remarkable piety of Count Mellerio induced me to confide to him the matter which chiefly occupied my thoughts.

In the month of June last year, I met the Abbé Löwenbruck at Mellerio's house. He had proposed to the Count the establishment of an Institute for ecclesiastics which he said he had long been planning, and the Count must have given him some hints of my designs, for the Abbé Löwenbruck presently took me aside and pressingly urged me to join him. I replied that we must first ascertain whether our respective vocations were identical, and intimated that I could not consent to any compromise as to the general design of the proposed institute. This I explained to him, and gave him time for reflection. Some time after he answered by letter that he was entirely of one mind with me. He had,

moreover, seen Monte Calvario, near Domodossola, and found it to be a suitable place. I also came to see it and was satisfied that it would suffice for a beginning; indeed I was surprised to find how several features agreed with the ideal I had in my own mind. Subsequently, I told my eager companion that, though I was pleased with everything, I could not as yet establish anything permanent, conscious as I was of my own weakness. I could only consent (subject to the approval of the Cardinal Bishop of Novara) to adopt such measures as would not lead to unforeseen consequences. Therefore, I would, at first restore the place and make it habitable, because this only involved the outlay of a few thousand francs, which in any case would not be wasted, for the improvements would be useful to others if not to ourselves. In the second place, I would spend Lent in that solitude for the better purification of my soul and to implore the manifestation of God's will, and that we might confer together as to the measures necessary to be taken should the foundation appear to be the will of God. We therefore agreed to meet here, on the "Sacred Mount," on Ash Wednesday, the 20th of February. Since this was only a temporary arrangement, I did not take anyone into my confidence, but came here with the two persons who usually accompany me on my journeys. The Abbé Löwenbruck, however, has not been able to come, and, from your Eminence, I learn he may have joined the Jesuits.

My stay here has made me desirous of remaining a longer time (since your Eminence allows me to do so) both because the air and the place at this season of the year are beneficial to my health, which is greatly impaired, and also because I never make a change unless Divine Providence offers me an occasion of so doing.

A few days ago I received a letter from a priest at Milan, Giovanni Boselli by name, asking to be allowed to join me. This priest (who is, I believe, about 33 years of age) was introduced to me at Milan by the Marchesa di Canossa, who also told him of her plan. He used to

come to me occasionally in the evening at Milan for a little spiritual conversation. In reply to his letter I told him it was not for me to invite him since I myself had need of a call; that he who bids another come must be responsible for the consequences; that I could not assume such a responsibility; still, if he believed himself to be sent by God he might come, for I could not refuse him; but he must commit himself to the care of Providence without placing reliance on me. He has written to say he will be here for Trinity Sunday. I know him to be a man of fervent piety and considerable talent. Such is the present state of my affairs. Your Eminence will perceive that the future is quite uncertain.

. In order that your Eminence may understand the nature of the project I have formed, I enclose a brief description of it in Latin. The substance of it is simply this: I would apply as a general rule of conduct the principle I myself adhere to, and which may be expressed in the form of two maxims:—

I.—We must seek our own perfection in a retired and hidden life of *study* and *prayer*. This would form the *first state*, so to speak, of the individual and of the Society, *the state of election, or choice*.

II.—We must comply with the *requests of our neighbour*, as well-ordered charity requires, and in so far as our strength permits. Thus the individual or the Society, in obedience to the invitation of Providence as intimated by means of external circumstances, would pass into a *second state*, not of election, but *accepted for the love of our neighbour*.

During my stay here this thought has never left me, and it has become too fully developed to remain longer hidden in my own mind.

I entreat your Eminence to implore for me the blessing of God in order that I may simply do His will; and I ask also for your support in my undertaking, in so far as you believe it to be the work of the Holy Spirit. Excuse the length of this letter; I considered myself bound to acquaint your Eminence fully with the matter.

A. R.

XXVIII.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK AT PARIS.

He expresses his joy on receiving good news from his friend.

Calvario di Domodossola,
May 30th, 1828.

I have been here ever since the 20th of February, the day appointed for our meeting on this holy Mount, hoping that the Lord would be pleased to send me my dear friend and brother Löwenbruck, at whose urgent request I had established myself here. It seems that our Lord intends to console me in my expectation, for I have just received a letter from Narbonne, showing that your sentiments are unchanged. Blessed be God for the wonderful ways of His Providence! Everyone here has been deriding me for being so confident, although I had not had a letter from you for three months, but now I have double cause for joy. On the very day you assure me of your constancy in the undertaking, I am joined by another Don Giovanni from Milan, not called by me, but sent by the Lord. Come then if our Lord sends you: come quickly. I am longing to embrace you and I trust that this my desire comes from our Lord. *Let us rejoice in the Lord*, and in our gratitude let us make Him the most complete and absolute sacrifice of self. My dear friend and brother, is it possible that we shall be confounded if we trust in God and in Him alone? No, never. Let us trust then in humility. How miserable we are! And yet what is there that can withstand us? Nothing by God's grace.

A. R.

XXIX.

TO CARDINAL MOROZZO, BISHOP OF NOVARA.

He explains his position at Calvario.

Domodossola,

June 19th, 1828.

On my return to this Sacred Mount, I hasten to offer my hearty thanks to your Eminence for the kindness with which you deigned to receive me and for the courtesy shown to me by your household.

As my only desire is to do the will of God, I beg you to obtain for me still greater light to know it and strength to follow it faithfully when known, for thus will all my aspirations be satisfied.

With regard to this house and its inmates, it is essential that no one should imagine there is here a *society* or community of *regular priests*. As a matter of fact there is not even the nucleus of a society. We are simply secular priests, bound by no mutual obligations, each one being master of his own actions and perfectly free to depart. These priests, who are no burden to any one because they provide for their own maintenance during their stay, are occupied in restoring an abandoned and dilapidated house; they serve the Sanctuary and minister to the spiritual needs of the people who frequent it.

If the affair is represented in this light, which is in perfect accord with truth, and is indeed the whole truth of the matter unless we wish to build castles in the air; I believe that every one would be satisfied because there is no question of spoiling anything but only of improving. But your Eminence will judge and act for the best.

A. R.

XXX.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LOWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He expresses his consolation at the good news from Calvario.

Rovereto,

August 29th, 1828.

My dearest brother and friend in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yesterday I reached my native town and was unable to write on account of the crowd of friends who surrounded me. Now I must reply to your kind letter of the 5th inst. which reached me at Recoaro after some delay.

I am pleased to hear you have subject matter prepared for the spiritual exercises. May Jesus and Mary bless the work you are doing for God's glory! If I find any books here that would help you I will send them. You must have already received those that were sent from Milan. I suppose that Molinari has joined you. I hope everything will be done diligently and peacefully. Let us keep with our Lord in tranquillity, I would almost say, in repose. "Knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience and *patience* hath a *perfect* work."

I shall be deeply interested in news of yourself and of the house, even to the most trifling details. Rest assured that at least in spirit I am always with you. I am settling my affairs here so as not to be disturbed with business during my absence from Rovereto for the journey to Rome which is recommended by the doctors. How glad I should be to have you with me! But for the present such is not the will of God. Let us therefore conform ourselves to His good pleasure and be content to be separated. With His grace we must try to be happy in any situa-

tion and be ready to forego even the delights of friendship when Divine Providence so disposes. Yes, the will of God is most lovable, most adorable. But without His grace our disquietude will torment and master us. In God is our rest; apart from Him what is there but disquietude? I speak from experience, for as I find that I bear about in me the germ of every evil, so do I find myself shaken by every wind and restless as the sea, did not God sustain me. Hence I entreat you to pray all the more for me because I cannot share your holy solitude and recollection. In the midst of the world, in which "everything is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life," I assure you I tremble and acknowledge that God alone can deliver me. He can save me even as He delivered the martyrs from the flames. Pray for me: let us both pray.

My health seems much improved. I offer it in oblation to God, for my only desire is to devote health and life to Him. Do you keep in good health? Write and tell me all about yourself.

A. R.

XXXI.

TO GIOVANNI PADULLI AT ROME.

His approaching visit to Rome.

Rovereto,

September 27th, 1828.

I have this moment received your kind letter of the 21st inst. and I reply without delay. Many thanks for the accomodation you have found for me, and please thank Cardinal Cappellari in my name for the trouble he has taken on my account. I should never have ventured to put him to so much inconvenience; and I am filled with confusion at the thought of his mentioning me to the Holy Father. Well, all the blame falls on you, for having spoken to the Cardinal about so trifling a matter. Any lodging would have been good enough for me; however, I am extremely grateful to you and hope to enjoy the effects of your kindness. I am looking forward to seeing you and your good sons. I feel sure Mellerio will join us. How happy we shall be all together, if God pleases. Certainly, we shall have long talks: I have a great deal to say, and you too, I fancy. In the meantime pray earnestly that my soul may not suffer in this holiday-time; and pray especially to our kind and tender Mother. What a comfort that our Lord should have made us sons of such a mother, His own mother! How real and how delightful is our tie of brotherhood, though the world knows it not!

I commend myself also to the prayers of your good sons. Enjoy your holiday in fair Tivoli. Perhaps you will be no longer there by the time I come. Meantime I thank you for your kindness and embrace you *in Domino*.

A. R.

XXXII.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Advice with regard to the Community at Calvario.

Rovereto,

October 15th, 1828.

My dearest friend and brother in the Lord.

I have received your kind letter of the 23rd of September, and since then you must have received the letter I wrote from the Tyrol. I am quite sure, as you say, that you are even more economical than if you were spending money of your own. However, what I have most at heart is that you should not suffer during the winter. I pray and entreat you (and would command you if I could) not to stint yourself in anything for fear of spending too much. A few francs more or less are of no consequence, provided you keep up your strength and do not injure your health.

I have not yet set out for the south of Italy, as my passport has not arrived; I am expecting it every day. If it comes in time I shall start immediately after the Feast of All Saints. Pray that the angel of God may accompany me. I will write to you as soon as I reach Rome. It gave me much pleasure to hear you were happy and contented. May God fill you with His joy and enable you to serve Him in humility and constancy! I am glad of what you tell me about Don Giovanni and the priest who is in Retreat with him. May the God of all mercies bless them, so that His best and most perfect gifts may bear fruits in their souls!

Molinari's health too is improving. I am glad of it. See that the germs of deep piety and love of God be

developed in him, and that they be fertilized by the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lamb. I am glad he should do any work you think proper to give him; but let him continue his studies, and study for the sake of charity, in other words for the love of Jesus Christ to whom we must minister in our brethren. See to it that the bond of charity unite all our companions. How delightful it is to see a house where many persons dwell, some of low and some of high degree, some of mean and others of great ability, persons who have very little in common according to the notions of the world; yet who consider one another simply as children of God and are all equal, all respect one another, or rather honour in their neighbour the image of Jesus Christ, honouring the seal of Baptism and the sanctification effected in them by the Sacraments common to all. It is but too true that with the eyes of the flesh we judge according to the flesh; but the eyes of the spirit see nothing worthy of esteem in men except their adoption as sons of God, and that sanctification which is equally found in men who seem so different from one another. Now I beg of you to consider attentively how the bonds of charity may be drawn closer and closer, that all may love one another in Jesus Christ, and compassionate and forgive one another, and forget themselves for the sake of others.

And since I am on the subject of love, do you love me, for my own affection is deep.

A. R.

XXXIII.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the special need of patience and prayer, in the present uncertain state of affairs.

Rome,

The Epiphany, 1829.

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

I must now tell you about myself and the state of our affairs. With regard to myself I am very well and comfortable, being lodged in the monastery of the Conventual Franciscans, which is close to the Basilica of the Holy Apostles. It is a large building and contains a great number of persons, including some priests from the East who have fled to escape persecution.

With regard to our own affairs, this is how they stand. Immediately after our arrival I went to visit the two Cardinals with whom I am acquainted, Cappellari and Zurla. They welcomed me with great kindness, and the former, in particular, showed an affability I never could have expected. He spoke to me with much affection and desired that I should frequently come to see him. He not only invited me to dinner but took me to the Consistory, introduced me to other Cardinals and spoke to the Pope about me. Indeed his friendliness was extraordinary and I cannot imagine whence it comes unless it be from God Himself who does as He pleases with us. Nevertheless he spoke only in general terms of our business, saying he wished to consider it carefully and quietly, and that at present he was too much occupied, but that after Christmas he would be able to fix a time for the purpose. In the meantime he directed me to confer with two priests for

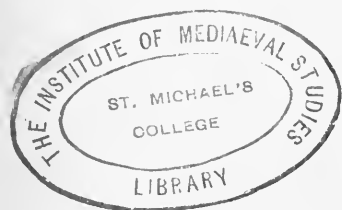
whom he had great esteem, saying that if their opinion were favourable it would have great weight with him; these persons are Padre Giovanluca, a Passionist, and Padre Cesarini of the Oratory. I have visited both these priests, and have been much pleased with both and consider them as men chosen by Providence to direct my course. I have begun to read and discuss the Constitutions with them; and as far as I can judge their opinion seems favourable.

You will understand that after a month's stay in Rome I am still quite in the dark about the whole matter, since I have hardly been able to say a word about it to Cardinal Cappellari, on whom I had chiefly counted. The weapon we need most is *patience* accompanied by *prayer*. We must remember that on this everything depends, especially in the beginning, when nothing can be done without much patience, even if Providence intend to bring about the accomplishment of our design. Beginnings are inevitably slow, and are always accompanied by delays and stoppages; and then we must be resigned and check our natural eagerness, because one of the defects of human nature is precisely this precipitation and impatience. God often intends to cure us of this by giving us occasions for expectation and trial of our endurance. With regard to this case, as well as in other matters, I believe we ought to make no calculations concerning the future. This is in accordance with our Constitutions which say that "we should occupy ourselves only with those things which are present and certain; we should remain quiet and content with these things and endeavour by their means to please God, who is everywhere; and if we hold to Him with lively faith we shall have no desire of seeking anything else," and again: "We must not prefer things uncertain and future to things present and certain, nor may we be solicitous about the former, but rather leave everything in the hands of God and His Divine Providence to whose care we must commit ourselves throughout life." Following this doctrine and basing my calculations only on what

is certain, I expect to be able to return after Easter, or when our business has been arranged, to the Sacred Mount of Calvario, there to lead the life God seems to require of me, the life traced out in our Constitutions.

I earnestly recommend myself to your prayers, begging of you to obtain for me a real conversion and grace to love the penance due to offended justice. Ask our dear Molinari and Carlo to pray for my spiritual necessities and let them offer Holy Communion for the same intention. I am exceedingly grateful to you for the Masses you have said for me. For a long time past I have offered all my Masses for you and for myself, praying that God may be with us and that we may do, not our will but His. Continue to love me and be quite sure you have in me, your unworthy servant, one who loves you with all his heart in our Lord.

A. R.



XXXIV.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

His stay in Rome. The necessity of perseverance in prayer.

Romé,

February 28th, 1829.

My beloved friend in our Lord, grace and peace.

I thank God that things continue to go well with you. Cardinal Morozzo, whom I met the day before yesterday, expressed his satisfaction with the services you have rendered in divers works of charity, and especially for the women in prison at Pallanza. He told me he had seen the house at Monte Calvario since it was restored, and that he had been perfectly satisfied with everything. He then said: "Do you intend to return to my diocese?" I answered that I wished to do so. I informed him that good progress had been made with regard to our little project, and that Leo XII. showed himself favourably disposed towards it before Divine Providence called him to a better world. I added that, in order not to multiply journeys and expenses without necessity, I was awaiting the election of a new pontiff, and that I wished to lay our plans before him in order that the Head of the Church might judge of it in the first instance, and that we might have in his judgment a safe rule for our future conduct. The Cardinal seemed satisfied; perhaps, in his charity, he will say something in our favour and thus bring the matter to a more speedy conclusion.

Let us leave everything in the hands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and of Mary His holy Mother. Let us on our part remain *tranquil* and *constant*, with lively faith in our Lord, in the certainty that He will bring to

pass whatever may be for His greater glory, and that He will not leave us without a guide to direct our steps so that we may safely reach our end, which is the salvation of our souls. During all this time I cannot apply the Holy Mass for any other object than for ourselves and the work we have in hand, to the end that God may effect our salvation in the best way possible, and may watch over the Church, His beloved Spouse, purchased with His Blood. I beg you also to pray most fervently (as I am sure you will) for the same object, and pray especially that I may not set obstacles in the way of Divine mercies by my transgressions. Obtain the prayers also of our dear brothers, Antonio, Carlo and Isaia. It gives me great pleasure to hear of their progress in obedience and in the love of regular observance. Who knows whether they are not all called to the religious life! I beg you to love them even as yourself, and not to spare in their regard aught of the charity of our Divine Master. If you use towards them the tender solicitude of a mother you will be able to look upon them as children in the Lord, should they in due time consecrate themselves to our Lord. I assure you, my dear friend and brother in Jesus, that I am looking forward eagerly to the moment when I shall be with you. This moment, however, does not seem near at hand. And since we wish to live in real dependence on Providence, always looking to God, who orders all things for our good and the good of His Church, we must bear patiently this temporary separation.

Let us imagine that we are *Novices* and that our *Master* is God Himself. He wishes to accustom us to mortification and to render us fit for every state, office and place. It is to this end that He allows us to be separated for a time. Let us then submit to our Master's training; let us form those habits which He desires us to form, and lest we should assume too much, let us not anticipate, but follow this good and kind Master. He tries us and purifies and mortifies us little by little, and if we are weak He supports us with His loving hand, provided that we act

not according to fancy but under the guidance of His adorable Providence. I assure you that I am ashamed to speak thus, painfully conscious as I am of doing nothing; but nevertheless I cannot refrain from expressing these sentiments, for I have no doubt you relish them and understand how true they are, by the grace which our Lord bestows on you. Certainly, before a man called by God becomes a *religious* he must be a *novice*, and remain so for a considerable time. Now, for you at any rate, this is the time of novitiate. I only made a commencement of mine last year, but I shall finish it when God pleases. For the rest, there is not and cannot be any lack of suffering in body and, still more, in spirit: this I reckon as one of our Lord's greatest mercies. My advice to you is this: "Persevere, and do not leave the novitiate of your own accord, but let Jesus in His Providence draw you out or send you back at His pleasure." After all what is our whole life on earth but a novitiate for heaven?

With regard to the estimates, allow me to offer a remark which may or may not be correct, and which I make in order to show my perfect confidence in you. If what I say is correct, you will profit by it; if it is not, pay no more attention to the remark than if it had not been made. Well then, I thought I noticed in all the estimates with which you supplied me at my request, a certain fear of mentioning such a large sum as might alarm me, and that you have not told me in consequence all that is really necessary. Allow me to say that even if the sum required for the affair is a large one I shall not be alarmed provided it does not exceed my means; and also that it is necessary to know the exact amount so that I can make my arrangements in time.

It is better, therefore, to tell me at the outset about everything that you judge to be really necessary; at the same time, you should cultivate the spirit of perfect indifference with regard to the effect of your statements. Thus you will act with that candour which is absolutely

necessary, and by telling the whole truth you trust in God and not in man, and place yourself in the hands of Divine Providence. If we can obtain a good and holy object with sincerity and frankness, then it is willed by God; let us try to attain it. Should it be impossible to attain it without some offence to the truth: then it is not God's will, and we must not desire it. Our zeal must never hinder us from being sincere and straightforward in everything we do. I should be unworthy to be your associate and it would be your duty to disown me if I refused to do a good work for love of money. But on the other hand I should be imprudent if, as the Gospel says, I did not sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary. If, however, my suspicion is unfounded, and you made your estimates too low either by accident or error, I withdraw all I have said, and beg you to excuse me in consideration of my earnest desire that we should walk in full light with one heart before God.

Continue to love and compassionate me in our Lord. Be quite sure that I always cherish the remembrance of you in my heart, especially at the altar. Embrace Molinari and the others for me *in Domino*. Remember me kindly to Canon Capis, to the Advocate Chiossi, to Piétro, to the Archpriest, and to anyone else that may enquire about me.

A. R.

XXXV.

TO THE SAME.

*His efforts to reform Philosophy. On tranquillity of spirit
and confidence in God.*

Rome,

March 17th, 1829.

My dear friend and brother in our Lord, grace and peace.

I received yesterday your kind letter. I can well believe that you find it hard to be unable to preach as usual; but the time will come in which God will richly compensate you for every mortification. It is enough that we work for Him alone; He will repay us well. The work on which I am engaged at present is the reform of Philosophy. I would fain establish a *Christian Philosophy* meaning thereby a *sound* Philosophy, not intermingled with the mysteries of religion, but leading necessarily to religion, and at the same time a *solid* Philosophy which will furnish good weapons against false and presumptuous systems and will be the foundation of a complete and satisfactory Theology.

I hope to be able to bring our plan forward soon after the election of a new Pope. You cannot imagine with what kindness Pope Leo listened to the project. Humanly speaking, one would have said he wished to crown it with the approval of the Holy See. But God has reserved for another the decision respecting us and our plans. We can help by means of prayer, patience, resignation and confidence in God, without desiring anything but His adorable Will. He knows what is for our good; we do not, though we may think we do.

We hear only rumours of the Conclave, but I do not

know how well-founded they may be. According to these rumours it was first proposed to elect Cardinal Pacca, and when his election failed many gave their support to Cardinal de Gregorio. Now it seems, he also has lost favour. My heart tells me that Cappellari is the future Pope. How deeply indebted we are to this Cardinal! Before entering the Conclave, he said to me with his usual amiability: "I am taking your memorial (the manuscript I had given him) with me into Conclave and will give it to others there to read."

Dear friend, let us be firm, resting in God without hesitation or wavering. Let us wait in faith, *wait for the Lord*, for He has no better means of teaching men than by making them wait. The general defect of men is excessive haste. How wise is a man who knows how to wait! Let us love one another as disciples, it is the Master's wish.

Salute all *in osculo sancto*. Donn' Andrea is with me and wishes to be remembered to you. Adieu.

A. R.

XXXVI.

TO THE ABBÉ J. B. LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

THE ELECTION OF PIUS VIII.

He does not wish to obtain success by the favour of men.*

Rome,

April 23rd, 1829.

Dear friend and brother in our Lord

I knew Pius VIII. the new Pope, as Cardinal in 1823, and on my arrival in Rome renewed my acquaintance with him before the Conclave. He was a friend of Mellerio's, and after his elevation to the Pontificate, he charged his intimate friend, Mgr. Polidori, to write to the Count for the express purpose of announcing his election. If I wished to employ human methods, assuredly it would be in my power to secure the strongest support, in the eyes of the world. But far from me be all this! With God's assistance, I intend to proceed calmly and obtain what God has destined for us by those means only which are natural and legitimate, with patience and resignation, for I desire to find myself perfectly tranquil in conscience, and to have no reason to fear that what ensues is my own doing rather than the working of Providence. I should be filled with confusion and consternation if I believed that I had depended on myself instead of looking to God for everything. On the other hand, what encouragement and what bright hopes would not be brought to me by the assurance that I had not chosen my own work, but that it had been destined for me by the will and providence of God! In this case, even amidst my extreme weakness and misery, I should feel myself sustained, refreshed and

restored to confidence and fearlessness by the reflection that God, who had laid the burden on my shoulders, would surely give me strength to carry it. It belongs to His goodness to come to our aid and be with us in all those perplexities in which He Himself, and none other, has placed us, such being His Divine and adorable will. This, therefore, is the object of my endeavours and my aspirations.

Cardinal Morozzo has borne favourable testimony to us in Rome. He told me he wished to speak about us to the Pope. Let us then be patient, and persevere in praying with one accord, for where two or three are gathered together in perfect harmony, to implore some favour of our Lord, they obtain whatever they desire. I will say no more about our affairs, because it does not seem advisable at present, and I trust you will not be offended by my reticence. I have said enough to make you aware of the state of the case.

I am glad to hear of your success. May God bless your labours and pour forth His spirit of charity on all who listen to your words. I embrace you lovingly in the Lord who is our salvation and our peace.

A. R.

XXXVII.

TO COUNT GIACOMO MELLERIO AT MILAN.

The encouragement and counsel received from Pius VIII.

Rome,

May 16th, 1829.

For some time past I have neither written nor received letters, but at length I find myself with you. I can well understand your affliction on account of your niece; I too share in your sorrow which is felt by so many of my friends. Signora Patrizi, whom I saw yesterday evening, seems well prepared to make the sacrifice, and indeed, the sacrifices we make to God should not appear hard to us, for we willingly give to one we love, and it is a pleasure even to suffer for him. I will refrain from offering words of comfort, because you have in yourself an inexhaustible fountain of consolation. Our Lord has not only taught you to be courageous in adversity and to carry the cross after Him, but He has trained you well in this school: these trials are proofs, infallible proofs of His love. I will say no more, as I am sure that it is you who are employed in consoling others. Occasions such as these are the most favourable opportunities for speaking of God.

Yesterday I had an audience of the Pope and asked his blessing for you and Padulli and all our friends at Milan. He gave it with great cordiality; I trust you will be as consoled as I was. He spoke to me with much wisdom and real light from God. Everything, however, tends to convince me that I shall be obliged to stay here a long time, and that my business will make very slow progress. This is inevitable. All whom I have consulted

have agreed in assuring me that the work is of God, and will therefore be accomplished : but in His own good time. Such is also my belief. The Lord alone knows the times and moments which He has in His own power. Nothing could be better. The greatest of all joys to me is that of waiting for the Lord and conforming myself to His Divine and ineffable will.

The Pope again encouraged me to write books, assuring me that this was the will of God in my regard ; and he advised me to keep myself free as much as possible from the occupations of the active life. This counsel sets my mind at rest ; the decision could not have been more spontaneous, nor from a better source. I have always thought I ought not to abandon my studies, but merely make other occupations fit in with them as far as possible. Henceforward all doubt is at an end, and I shall go on with my eyes shut, so to speak. I have a work on philosophy in the press now; it will be in three volumes. I beg you to remember me to our friends, and to intercede for me with our Lord. Believe me to be now and always, as I trust,

Your friend,

A. R.

XXXVIII.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

An account of his interview with Pope Pius VIII.

Rome,

May 23rd, 1829.

My dear friend and brother in Jesus Christ,

I am writing to tell you about the interview I had with Pope Pius VIII., a week ago. I was presented to him by a Cardinal who has shown me much kindness. I found the Pope very gracious and kind. He spoke of the books I had presented to him, and he showed himself to be already acquainted with some of my writings. He bade me continue the scientific labours on which I am engaged, and used such flattering expressions that I should be ashamed to repeat them. Next he began to discuss our project, of which he had received favourable accounts, especially from Cardinal Morozzo. The Holy Father spoke to me as follows (I repeat his words that they may serve as the rule for our future conduct): "If you are thinking of beginning in a small way and of leaving the rest to God, *We give our approval*, and are well pleased that you should begin. But if you want to start on a large scale, We do not think this advisable. We are not now speaking as the Vicar, though unworthy, of Jesus Christ, but simply as considering actual times and circumstances."

Here the Holy Father began to speak of a Congregation which had done well for a certain time, because it had been content with little; subsequently, however, it took a different course, and has not fulfilled the expectations formed concerning it. The Holy Father expatiated on the importance of humility and prudence, and showed how

necessary it is in all such undertakings to begin on a small scale, and to let God give the increase in His own time and according to His good pleasure ; that we should not form grand projects, but simply do the little that we can, living perfectly content and satisfied therewith. All that the Holy Father said was full of the spirit of God, of heavenly wisdom and unction. His words afforded me the greatest consolation, because they expressed unconsciously my own thought, the thought I have always cherished in my inmost heart, and the basis of our whole plan.

I replied much as follows: "Holy Father, I do not know how the matter has been represented to your Holiness, but I can assure you of this, that I have never thought of commencing with anything great, but only of beginning in a small way. Mine is not an extraordinary vocation, such as was that of St. Ignatius, but a very ordinary one. My only reason for having recourse to your Holiness is that I wish to make quite sure whether, if I continue as I have begun, I shall be in the right path or not; so that I may know whether I should go on or turn back." The Pope answered: "You are on the right path. Continue by all means, provided you do as We have said; that is, begin in a small way, and leave the disposal of everything to our Lord, for if the work is of God, He will not fail to make it succeed." I then asked his blessing for you and all the inmates of our house at Domodossola, and for the friends and helpers of the work: he bestowed it gladly and with cordiality, and his manner towards me in parting was full of apostolic charity.

I wished to give you a full account of this interview, in order that you may understand that we have now received from the lips of the Vicar of Jesus Christ the rule which should direct our conduct. We know, in the first place, that we are on the right path and are doing God's will in proceeding as at present and as we intend to do in future. Secondly, our principal rule, given to us by God Himself by means of His Vicar, is the very one we had proposed to ourselves, namely: "We should tread under

foot all human ambition, all ill-regulated zeal, and pay no heed to the imagination which may deceive us with extravagant projects; our one desire must be to serve God in our littleness, that is, with the little means of doing good which He has granted us; we must live contented in our obscurity, sanctifying ourselves in all earnestness, and estimating at its true value all that appertains to God's service, whether our task be great or little, known or unknown to men." Therefore we must go on bravely, for we have the approval of the visible Head of the Church; but at the same time let us be earnest and cautious, because the representative of God upon earth has warned us of the possibility of diabolical illusion, if we allow ourselves to seek on our own responsibility things above our humble condition. Such is the substance of my audience with the Holy Father, and the instruction we must derive therefrom.

After the audience, which left in me a deep sense of joy and tranquillity, I consulted the Cardinal with whom I am best acquainted, as to the next step I should take, and whether I should return to Domo or remain in Rome. He said it was necessary for me to remain, and to draw up a summary of the Constitutions for the inspection and, please God, the approval, of the Congregation of the Bishops and Regulars. Moreover, I trust that some Indulgences will be granted for our church at Domo, for ourselves and all who may contribute directly or indirectly to the advancement of the work. I shall therefore prolong my stay, and occupy myself in the meantime with books that will be useful for the reform of ecclesiastical studies. The Pope has laid on me an express injunction to write books, intimating to me that it is God's will and saying in conclusion: "Remember that you must not become absorbed in the labours of the active life, but that you must write books." He impressed this on me with words full of charity and energy. I shall therefore act accordingly, such being the will of God at present.

I am glad you approve of my proposal that we should

confine ourselves in the beginning, as far as external works are concerned, to conducting Retreats for seminarists and to matters appertaining to the education of the clergy if we are invited to do so. I have provided a book which will be useful, and will get other works later on. Above all, let us pray without ceasing and labour for the sanctification of our own souls, so that all our good, all our aspirations and our every desire may be comprised in this one thing. This is the way to find true stability and tranquillity in our work. Pray earnestly for me, for while I am preaching to others I am but a poor sinner myself; but God, who has given me an ardent desire of sanctity, will crown His work by fulfilment. Then shall I say with all my heart, *Nunc Dimittis*. Give my salutations *in Domino* to Molinari, whom I love in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the other two brothers. Remember me to our good friend, Canon Capis; tell him he is constantly in my thoughts and that I am looking forward to our meeting; that I thank him for his kindness to you and your companions, and recommend myself to his prayers. Adieu. Adieu. Let us be *one heart and soul in the Lord*.

A. R.

XXXIX.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He encourages his companion to undertake a mission of charity.

Rome,

October 19th, 1829.

My most beloved brother and friend in Jesus Christ our Lord to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Our friend at Milan is very glad that you are going to remain, and I give thanks to God for it with all my heart, because I had no part directly in the matter, but all the circumstances combined under the direction of Providence to bring it to pass. More than ever must we be grateful to our good God. I regard all that has happened and all that is yet to come as a further expression of His will that we should be constant in our conduct and persevere in serving Him on this sacred mount. Let us hope in Him and in Him alone. Though our friend seems to have hinted that he would be willing to advance money for your work in case of need, nevertheless, let us not count on this any more than if he had said nothing about it. Thus we shall rest as we wish to do, upon what is certain and present, rather than upon uncertain and future contingencies. My beloved friend in Jesus Christ, I assure you that this is an excellent rule for preserving interior firmness and calmness : not to entertain human hopes, not to base any project upon them, but to live for the day, basing all our calculations on the present, and for the rest abandoning ourselves into the hands of God. How secure is the man who does not concern himself with uncertainties, but centres all his thoughts in God alone and is quite content

with the present, as though there were to be no changes in the future. This I consider the true road to peace and constancy of heart.

I admire and praise your intention of going to the assistance of the poor people at Formazza, and I thank you with all my heart, because it is really a good work. I hope that your resolution has been dictated only by the spirit of God, which will, I trust, fill and possess your soul. The task will be arduous in the winter, but if you have been moved to undertake the work by the spirit of Divine charity, I feel confident that God will assist and protect you in all difficulties. For myself, if in my unworthiness and misery I can do nothing else, I will at least pray for you, that you may worthily accomplish the work you have taken in hand for the love of God. By all means, therefore, set to work cheerfully ; I heartily approve of the undertaking and rejoice in the Lord. I know well how much you will have to endure, and you have my full sympathy. But I know too that God will requite you for all that you do in His service, that the very sweat of our brow is not in vain, and this consoles me. For my part I should be delighted to be with you and help you in some little way by my feeble efforts ; but, as I have told you, it is absolutely necessary for me to remain here, since to leave incomplete what has been begun would involve a grievous loss. As soon as the business is settled I will come. At the latest I expect to leave before spring. Continue to love me in the Lord, and let all your work be done in Him with the prudence of the serpent and simplicity of the dove ; pray for him who loves you without measure in Jesus Christ our Saviour and our All. Embrace for me Molinari, and the other two companions. Remember me most cordially to our friend Canon Capis, assure him of my speedy return and beg of him to pray for me and for us all. Give my kind remembrances to all who know me and inquire about me. Adieu. Adieu.

A. R.

XL.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK.

On prudence and simplicity in speaking.

Rome,

December 17th, 1829.

Let us walk in simplicity not only before God, but also in the sight of man. Let us act with all sincerity and simplicity, and at the same time with prudence. Simplicity will enable us to yield ourselves so thoroughly to God, that we shall not fear to be perfectly truthful, even when humiliation may come of it. Let us accept the humiliation, God will accept our mortification. But prudence requires that we should have some good reason to show for what we do; otherwise men may justly deride us or accuse us of indiscretion in expecting them to believe us blindly. They may reproach us not only with a want of delicacy, but even with presumption, if we expect our word to be respected just because it is ours. Let us in this, as in all other things, keep before our eyes our model Jesus Christ, who deigned to confirm His words with miracles, and called His Father to witness of the truth of His mission. "If I do not the works of my Father do not believe me." I have often wondered why the Blessed Virgin did not tell St. Joseph of the apparition of the Angel, and I think it was because she could give no proof of it, and she was so humble that she did not expect her word to be believed. Let this be our model, our rule. Let us never make an assertion unless we can give some proof of what we say, especially as our Lord has said, "Beware of men."

Forgive me, my dear brother, if I insist on these maxims. I think that if it were in the ineffable designs of God that we should form an association, its success

would depend on the *maxims* formulated at the commencement. Hence I consider it of the utmost importance to occupy ourselves seriously in discovering those maxims which are most conformable to the spirit of God. And I think one of these maxims is that we should use great respect and delicacy in treating with our fellow-men; not only should we act with all frankness and evangelical simplicity, but likewise we should endeavour not to advance a proposition that we cannot prove. My dear friend, let us go forward with purity of intention and simplicity. Let us take the humiliations that come to us from the hand of God and not dread them; for humiliation it is that opens the eyes of our spirit, excites faith, promotes hope and inflames in us the love of God, which is His grace communicated to the humbled.

I hear that we shall soon have Molinari a deacon. Some persons have offered to join us, but I will tell you everything when I see you. We must have patience and live in peace, meditating on the wants of our soul. I wished to leave Rome before, but I see that it was Providence which kept me here, and will keep me a little longer. All the same, in spirit I am always with you at Calvario, and I thank our Lord for this delay as for all else. God's ways are not our ways and His designs are far-reaching. My dear friend, pray for me as I do for you. I always offer the Holy Sacrifice for you and for myself, an unworthy sinner, that God may save us and enable us to execute His will faithfully. The works I have published here are all means to the same end, for in all my thoughts and desires I have but one thing in view, the salvation of our souls. Adieu. Live in the peace of the Lord. May He fill you with His light, and may His law be a lamp to our feet. "I said: My portion O Lord, is to keep Thy law. Then I shall not be put to shame when I consider all Thy commandments." God grant it may be so. Amen, amen. Adieu, in *osculo sancto*.

A. R.

XLI.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On prudence and constancy in good works.

Rome,

December 25th, 1829.

May Jesus Christ be born in our hearts and in the hearts of our companions.

I was grieved to hear that the Cardinal of Novara was displeased at your abandoning Formazza in order to go to Aosta, and that he said of you "that you had zeal, but he was afraid you were changeable and incapable of persevering in a work undertaken." If we once gain the reputation of being changeable and inconstant, it would be fatal to our project, and diametrically opposed to the spirit of our Institute, a spirit of confidence in God and consequently of tranquillity and firmness; ours is not a spirit of *enterprise*, but of humility and patience, awaiting the call of God in the hidden life. Let us never take the first step by *seeking* opportunities of doing work, but wait for a call, and if we are not sought out, let us remain hidden in God.

You will remember that we have chosen two maxims, and that on these two simple maxims must be based all our conduct through life. These are:

1st. To choose a hidden and contemplative life, in imitation of Jesus Christ in the thirty years of His Hidden Life, and of Mary Magdalen, who chose "the better part." We must be deeply convinced of the excellence of this state.

2nd. To pass into *the active life*, when we are *invited by our neighbour to do so*, that thus we may fulfil the commandment of love, which is the characteristic precept of the

disciples of Jesus Christ. This we must do with simplicity and prudence, with alacrity but at the same time with *well-ordered* charity and the circumspection enjoined by Jesus Christ when he said : "Beware of men."

This is our entire rule. For the love of God, let us not depart from it. Let us not be deceived by the hope of doing good to souls if our prudence is not "according to knowledge." I thank God with all my heart for the way in which you write on the subject and your resolution to be in future more circumspect. It is of the utmost importance that we should advance so cautiously as not to be compelled afterwards to retreat, thus giving occasion for censure and perhaps causing confusion. I trust in God's mercy and in it alone. Far from us be the building of hopes on our own talent and on our captious reasonings. If we put our trust in God alone, the truth will shield us ; otherwise we shall tread the path of the enemy, the father of vain subtleties and lies. Believe me, my dear brother, if we do not act with the greatest prudence at the outset, we shall finally be involved in such difficulties that we shall almost be compelled to utter falsehoods in order to extricate ourselves. And who can assure us that we shall not yield to the temptation of telling an untruth, especially if the devil astutely disguises a tissue of falsehoods as truth ? Who can assure us that our pride will not involve us in a mesh of falsehoods ? And will these save us ? Assuredly not, they will draw us into the vortex and be our ruin. See how necessary is prudence,—especially in the beginning,—together with confidence in God, the ground-work of truth and loyalty, a humble opinion of ourselves and open war against the enemy of souls. This principle is so dear to me, and to you also I am sure, that I could not refrain from making these observations. Adieu *in osculo sancto*.

A. R.

XLII.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

An account of Luigi Gentili's call to the Institute of Charity.

Rome,

February 16th, 1830.

My dearest brother in Jesus Christ, from whom is salvation and grace!

I do not know whether you have received my last two letters, dated the 9th and 13th of January respectively. In the first of these I mentioned the probability of another member being added to the little society of Calvario. I fear that the letter has miscarried, so I will repeat what it contained, with further particulars. During my convalescence after smallpox, I received a visit from a young man who was a perfect stranger to me, and was introduced by a priest whose acquaintance I had made in Rome. After the first visit, the young man came again several times to see me, and having heard that I had published something or other, he asked to read some of my essays, which I gave him. He told me that he was so delighted with my line of thought in one of these essays as to feel greatly attracted to me from the instant of reading it. I saw him frequently afterwards, and he wished to know what I was doing, whether I meant to remain at Rome, where I was going and for what purpose, &c. In answer to all these questions I simply told him the truth. Soon after, on hearing me speak of Domodossola, he began to say, "Who knows that God does not wish to have me there?" "Who knows that He has not destined me to be your associate?" but I only answered coldly, or kept silence. You must know that this young man

had gone through the entire course of legal studies, and after taking the Doctor's degree in Civil and Canon Law, had entered upon the career of a barrister, following the profession of his father, a distinguished lawyer. The profession was, however, distasteful to him, so he tried to support himself and assist his family by giving Italian lessons to the English visitors, who spend a great deal of money here in the winter. The youth, whose name is Luigi Gentili, speaks English almost as well as an Englishman, and made a good deal of money by his teaching, so that he was able to purchase a vineyard, and was on the way to make his fortune. But God, it seems, intended him for something better, and inspired him with disgust for his pursuits and for the secular life which is never free from danger. He soon began to think of leaving the world and giving himself wholly to God, but as yet he knew not whither God called him. At first he thought he was called to the Society of Jesus, for which he had and still has a great esteem and affection. But scarcely had he come to this conclusion and asked to be admitted among the Jesuits, when he was seized by an attack of tertian ague, to which he remained subject for a whole year. The doctors finally persuaded him to give up all thought of joining the Jesuits, for some time at any rate. At length he found himself restored to health, and more desirous than ever of giving himself to God, though he no longer wished to become a Jesuit. He was in this frame of mind, when chance or rather Divine Providence, which rules and disposes the most unforeseen accidents, brought him to me first during my illness and again after my recovery. He began by asking me many questions about our manner of life, showing a desire to adopt it himself. I never urged him to join me, but confined myself to telling him: (1) That the perfect life of the Evangelical Counsels is of infinite value and blessed is he who follows them: (2) That, should he be resolved to consecrate himself to the perfect life, the first step was to leave his home (*Egredere de domo tua*) in order

to devote himself wholly to God and the work of his own sanctification. He told me repeatedly that, with regard to the first point, he was determined to embrace the Evangelical Counsels, but that as to the second, he did not know how it could be done, since if he gave up his teaching entirely he would be left without means of subsistence. His family also looked to him for assistance.

To all these observations I replied that he should pray to God and trust in His providence. All this time I never said a word concerning our own Institute, but merely spoke of perfection in general. One evening, the youth came to me and to my surprise threw himself at my feet, saying that he performed this humiliating act with great repugnance, but that he had resolved to conquer himself, because the inspiration seemed to come from God. He then besought me to assist him with alms, so that he might be able to leave home and give up his teaching to devote himself to the theological studies already commenced in the Roman College. I replied much as follows, that the object he had in view was good and holy, and that I would willingly have assisted him in attaining it, but that he knew of the work I had undertaken at Monte Calvario. I told him that I had consecrated my worldly substance, such as it was, to the service of God in the little Society of the Sacred Mount, but that if the inclination he had shown towards the society were to change into purpose or resolve, I should be able to do what he asked of me. Under other circumstances it would not be in my power.

The young man took time to think the matter over, and at length, after consultation with his spiritual advisers, he told me that he had resolved to join our little society. For all this I gave thanks to God, and began to hope that perhaps this youth was one of the companions sent me by the Lord. After this his departure from home was effected quietly, and thanks to the care of Divine Providence, he obtained admittance into the Irish College, where he now is, and pays for his own maintenance. All

the Irish students attend the lectures given in the Roman College, and Gentili does the same. Cardinal Cappellari, having authority over that college, kindly admitted him at once. It is now proposed that Gentili should receive some of the minor orders, and I am inclined to let him advance as far as the Diaconate, but I am waiting for further light from God on this point. You see I have had no part in all this. May God who has done all be blessed for ever! We shall wait to see how God will dispose the sequel, and whatever it may be we shall with His grace rest perfectly content.

Your letter has just arrived; but I will answer it another time, as it is now post-time. Adieu.

A. R.

XLIII.

TO CARDINAL CAPPELLARI AT ROME.

*On the death of Pope Pius VIII. Of the progress made by
the Institute of Charity.*

Calvario di Domodossola,

December 10th, 1830.

I was on the point of writing to your Eminence when the sad news reached me of the death of the Supreme Pontiff, to me quite unexpected and extremely painful, especially when I consider what critical times these are in which the Church is deprived of her Chief Pastor. Although I imagine that your Eminence will be somewhat distressed by this occurrence, and though some of my motives for writing no longer exist, still I will not abandon my intention of visiting your Eminence by letter, in order to condole with you on this great loss. Indeed, I cannot forego this satisfaction at a time when you are about to enter the conclave; for since the designs of God are hidden I do not know whether I shall ever again be able to turn to you with that filial confidence and freedom which your benignity has been pleased to accord me hitherto.

I had two motives in wishing to write to you. In the first place, the paternal affection which your Eminence has always shown me and the interest you have deigned to take in my affairs, required that I should inform you about myself and the new Institute. Secondly, the Holy Father Pope Pius VIII. had encouraged me to ask for certain favours from the Holy See, namely, various indulgences and faculties for persons entering the society or co-operating in its labours of charity; and in order that I might not appear to set little value on such treasures, I wished to beg

your Eminence to procure them for me. I should have sent you a list of the indulgences and faculties which seem desirable at present, but since this motive ceases with the death of the Holy Father I will confine myself to the first.

So far all things have gone smoothly and in good order. I have had many applications from excellent priests who desire to enter our society, but I have thought it best to keep them outside for a time and direct them in various works of charity, according to the spirit of the Institute. In this way I have opportunities of observing and knowing them better. I have done this in order to follow the mind of our Holy Father Pius VIII., who, in the very first audience your Eminence obtained for me, counselled me to proceed with much slowness and circumspection; also because, as your Eminence is aware, the Institute does not require that its members should all live together in community, but allows them to live out of the Houses if the Superior should judge this advisable. As regards the formation of the Institute, my companions have thought proper to choose a Superior; this indeed was necessary. But—I cannot say it without a true sense of shame—they have resolutely insisted on electing me. I could not prevent this, but I have only accepted the office provisionally. Since undertaking this responsibility I have thought it my duty to occupy myself almost exclusively in training myself (though with little result) and my companions in the spirit of the Institute. As far as the latter are concerned, I have the consolation of seeing them advance daily in solid piety and in charity. All this is due without doubt to the goodness of God.

I have had several opportunities of establishing new houses, but have not thought it well to do so, because I wished to lay a good foundation here before extending the work elsewhere, in order, as I said, to follow completely the mind of the Holy Father and the spirit of our Constitutions.

I have accepted one house only, formerly a convent of the Ursulines here in Domodossola. This I have done for

various reasons, but first of all because on this Sacred Mount we have the house only, our use of the church and garden being precarious. The church is under the direction of a canon, who lives in an adjoining house, and the garden merely let on lease. I thought it well, on this account, to have a house and garden in the town, to which in any unforeseen circumstance our religious family might be transferred. As regards this place also, the house will always be of service as a place in which to give retreats to the clergy of the neighbourhood, even though we should not be able to buy the garden (which I hope to do) and should have only the use of the church. This is a work which our bishop, Cardinal Morozzo, has greatly at heart. Thus we shall have a house at Domodossola, with a body of priests under a Provost, who will attend to all such works of charity as they may have the means of carrying on, and we shall retain this house on the Sacred Mount, with a few priests under a Rector, devoted exclusively to a particular work of charity, viz., that of serving the church and giving retreats to the clergy. This house will be subject to the one at Domodossola. In this way we shall see the beginning of the two kinds of houses, which are mentioned in the Constitutions, one for charity in general, the other for a particular branch of charity. I hope we shall open this house at Domodossola in the course of next spring, unless Divine Providence dispose otherwise.

I must also tell your Eminence about the Constitutions. In the last audience I had with Pius VIII. of holy memory, as I mentioned to your Eminence, he of his own accord expressly enjoined me to present the Constitutions in writing for the approval of the Holy See, but he bade me first get them approved by the bishop of the diocese. When Count Mellerio took leave of him, the Pope deigned to send me a reminder of these instructions (which indeed, I had not forgotten). The Holy Father said with great kindness to Count Mellerio: "Tell Rosmini to make ready and send." Knowing the wishes of the Pope, I had the Constitutions copied out, intending to send them for

examination first to Mgr. Scavini, Vicar General of the diocese of Novara, that they might subsequently be submitted to Cardinal Morozzo. On their approval by the bishop I had intended to send them to your Eminence, availing myself of the kind offer you made before my departure to Rome, in order that your Eminence might do what you judged most expedient and most in accordance with the mind of the Pope himself. Now all this must of course be deferred.

The various works of charity which we are invited to undertake are progressing well by the grace of God. Last Sunday, we received the abjuration of a Protestant in our Church. This is the seventh time that we have had such a function, and it always gives edification to our good simple people.

With respect, &c.,

A. R.

XLIV.

TO MGR. LUSCHIN, BISHOP OF TRENT.

Response to an invitation to make a foundation at Trent.

Domodossola,

December 23rd, 1830.

I cannot find words in which to express my gratitude to your lordship for your most courteous letter, which only reached me yesterday. It is entirely in keeping with the kindness which, without any merit on my part, you have shown to me ever since you undertook the government of the diocese of Trent.

In the first place, I must thank you for the good wishes you offer me on the occasion of the approaching festivals of Christmas and the New Year. I return these good wishes a hundredfold and earnestly implore the Almighty to bestow His most abundant benedictions on your pastoral labours, and to impart to you all those temporal and spiritual gifts which you may desire.

With regard to the invitation you give me to come to Trent and establish there a community of priests useful to Holy Church, I am deeply touched by this suggestion, and I appreciate still more the courtesy and delicacy which prompted you to intimate that if I have finally decided on my plans, you do not wish to disturb them but that you leave me perfectly free. An invitation so kind and generous, that can have been suggested only by pastoral zeal, not only calls forth my most heartfelt gratitude, but constrains me to open my whole heart to you and acquaint you with all my circumstances and my intentions. I could not keep these things a secret from you, and yet I should have been afraid to disclose them unless

you yourself had moved me to do so. Now, however, you have offered me an opportunity or rather imposed on me the duty of speaking, and at the same time I shall obtain the benefit of that enlightened counsel, which I trust you will not deny to me.

As long ago as 1826, you were pleased to inquire whether I desired to hold any office in the diocese, professing yourself ready to meet my wishes. I deemed it necessary to inform you how matters stood with me, and made known to you the ruling principle of my conduct. This was, "to remain perfectly tranquil in my present state, in the earnest endeavour to fulfil my duties therein; not to undertake anything of my own accord, but not to refuse any work that Providence might offer me; and to remain in complete indifference as to serving God in one way or another, following simply the rules of prudence." Amongst these rules of prudence one of the most important in my opinion was this: not to accept responsibilities that might hinder one from effecting a greater good or finishing a work already commenced. It was chiefly owing to this consideration (and not, I hope, through sluggishness or cowardice) that I refused the honourable offers that were made to me in the capital of the Christian world as far back as 1823, during the pontificate of Pius VII. and on several subsequent occasions. I mention this because I do not wish to keep anything back from your Lordship. In this refusal I was also actuated by a genuine and deep sense of my own unworthiness, and by the dread of responsibilities which all find burdensome, and I should find doubly so, conscious as I am of my own incapacity.

These same principles induced me in the same year, 1826, to absent myself for a time from my native place. I wished to continue the studies already begun, through which I might, in the opinion of persons in authority, be able to effect some little good. Unwilling to let pass an opportunity of rendering a service, I decided to take up my residence at Milan. In a small town like Rovereto there were not the advantages for study presented by

Milan; and I was moreover pressed to undertake a work of charity in that city. Certainly, as your lordship observes, a Christian, even a priest, has duties to his own native place. But I thought (and still think) that if I succeeded by means of my studies in promoting the general good of mankind, as judicious persons led me to expect, I should have rendered much greater service to my fellow-townsmen than I could effect by living among them. It is possible that, had I remained, I should but have given them offence by my faults, for a man's failings are most keenly observed by those nearest to him.

It is, doubtless, true that divine Providence, in decreeing that we should be born in a certain locality, invites us to render ourselves serviceable first of all to that locality; but this is true only on the supposition that the first occasions of doing good present themselves in that place. Should this not be the case, it seems to me that we best conform ourselves to the intention of divine Providence and the spirit of the Gospel, by undertaking those good works that are first offered to us in any part whatever of Holy Church. Souls are of equal value in any place, for all alike were purchased by the Blood of Jesus Christ. Certainly a natural inclination (which I have always felt most strongly) would lead us to restrict ourselves to our native place, and still more to our own family, and finally to our own personal interests, for it is one and the same tendency to restriction which produces these affections. Nevertheless, I believe that the Gospel principle of universal benevolence can alone bring true peace to the world, and together with peace all good things. This universal benefit, redounding to the advantage of particular localities, will eventually be felt also in our native place, though at first sight this is not evident. The principle of universal benevolence seems vague, because its effects are not immediately perceptible.

With regard to my studies, I was soon afterwards encouraged by Pius VIII. of holy memory, to persevere with them, as I mentioned in a previous letter. The command

laid on me spontaneously by the Pope seemed an explicit declaration and renewed manifestation of God's will. On my taking leave of the Holy Father, he gave me this general injunction: "Endeavour to help men by the way of the intellect, for in our times men must be led less by external and sensible means than by reason." He spoke at some length on the subject, and added these remarkable words: "We distrusted our own judgment on this point, but after earnest prayer to God for light our conviction remains unshaken." Not only did the Holy Father command me to write books, but also, speaking in general, he urged me to instil the truth by means of reasoning. This suggestion, even apart from the authority of the speaker, seems to me most wise, for judging from what I know of the world, I consider that the source of well-nigh all our present evils is the want of a Christian philosophy, theoretical and practical. And since I have touched on the advice given me by Pius VIII., I will also mention that he warned me not to anticipate rashly the designs of Providence but to follow its guidance in all things; though as far as I am aware, the Pope did not know that this was precisely my general rule of conduct.—The work of charity which formed one of my motives for going to Milan came to an end in the ordinary course of things, and I found myself free. Other occasions of doing some little good presented themselves, and these I accepted without however incurring any permanent obligation. One of these works was the care of the little community of priests and laymen which, unsought, has gathered round me on the Sacro Monte di Calvario at Domodossola, a Sanctuary dedicated to the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I may say that I have had no actual share in the establishment of this community, for I have merely yielded to the desire and requests of certain devout persons, of whom I told you something on a former occasion. To tell the whole story in brief:—It is now many years since a holy woman, well known to yourself, the foundress of the Daughters of Charity in Italy, urged me to establish a

Congregation of Brothers of Charity, resembling in some respects the congregation she had founded for women. I always met her suggestions with objections, for the following reasons. In the first place I did not find myself in any way fitted for accomplishing a work of such importance. Secondly, I could not undertake it without abandoning in great part my studies and restricting myself entirely to certain special works of charity. Now this would have been contrary to my rules of conduct. On the one hand I was averse to undertaking occupations that might interfere with work already begun; on the other it was contrary to my principles to renounce what was conducive to the *general* good in order to devote myself to some *particular* good. As, however, that good lady continued to urge the matter in her letters, it occurred to me in 1825 that I might comply with her wishes, but only on condition; 1st, that some persons should of their own accord ask to live with me in community; 2nd, that they should fall in with my way of thinking, that is, that we should agree not to undertake any work of charity of our own accord, but to be ready for any and every work if our neighbours invited us to do it and if it were not beyond our strength. These conditions did not seem likely to find fulfilment; in fact I spent two years quietly at Milan without anything occurring. But in 1827 a priest begged to be allowed to live with me. I replied that I would receive him if he were willing to adopt the principle of living in retirement and of not undertaking anything except at the request of our neighbour. This principle he highly approved of. Subsequently the Cardinal of Novara gave us this place, and I came to live here, not as in a religious house but as in a place of retirement which was at once delightful and suited to that common life which I had intended to lead with the companion sent to me by Providence. On my arrival I wrote to the Cardinal that I had come merely to make a spiritual retreat, but that if the place suited me I would remain some time longer, without fixing any definite period.

After this, my household was increased by the arrival of another priest, and a student for the priesthood with some laymen ; but it continued still on the same temporary footing and holding the same principles. Although we led a most retired and studious life, yet there was no lack of calls upon our charity. My companions and myself have consequently been employed in various kinds of charitable labours : the instruction of Protestants, the education of church students, the chaplaincy to a prison, missions, spiritual retreats, the teaching of Christian doctrine, hearing confessions, attending the sick, &c. Seeing how the work was growing, I thought it well to consult the Holy Father. This was one of the two motives that induced me to go to Rome, the other being the infirm state of my health. Pius VIII., of holy memory, warmly encouraged me to continue, adding that he would grant me all the indulgences and spiritual favours I might ask for. He also enquired whether I had drawn up the Constitutions. I replied in the affirmative, but added that I was not seeking their approbation as yet, being content to know that the Holy See did not disapprove my course of action. He replied most kindly : “ We understand that you are merely asking for a negative approval. Nevertheless we desire that you should take the necessary steps for obtaining the formal approbation of the Constitutions, by having them approved in the first place by the Bishop of the diocese in which the Institute is established and then sending them to the Sacred Congregation. We shall approve them when the time comes.” Subsequently the Holy Father condescended to send me a message, bidding me “ remember to get ready and send.”

Amongst other labours of charity, His Eminence Cardinal Morozzo expressed a desire that I should establish a house intended exclusively for the purpose of spiritual retreats, chiefly for the advantage of priests who have the care of souls. I promised to do so, in order not to refuse a good work which was not of my own seeking. With this view I have taken steps to acquire a convent

in the town of Domodossola. Thus it has come about that without my seeking for anything I have in hand the commencement of two establishments. Nevertheless I have not incurred any responsibilities whatever, for I consider these priests merely as members of my household ; and I propose to remain in this state of private life. In course of time and when things are more settled, I intend that my companions should take the three religious vows and that some of them should add a fourth vow of readiness to accept any mission given them by the Roman Pontiff, however I purpose even then to keep them free from responsibilities, and in complete privacy, with the sanction of the Bishop of the Diocese. In fact, their union will take the form of a private household of friends rather than that of a publicly recognized Religious Order.

You have now been fully informed of the whole matter and can form your own judgment concerning the answer I am inclined to make to your most kind proposal. According to my principle of not refusing to render those services which are in my power and are requested of me, I must naturally desire to comply with your kind invitation, especially as it concerns my own beloved diocese, and I may add without flattery, my own beloved Bishop. But, since you are good enough to leave me perfectly free, I cannot agree to the proposal unless it be consistent with the principles I have hitherto embraced. One of these forbids my abandoning a work begun in order to undertake another. And I must add that though I have made no formal engagements with any individual, still I have *by facts* incurred responsibilities before the public. Therefore, with all my heart I accept the proposal to form at Trent a union of priests similar to that which exists here, but *on condition that the latter be not abandoned*. Secondly, in order that we should not be debarred from a greater good, it is necessary that no restrictions should be imposed on the Institute ; for it will naturally and spontaneously restrict its own activities, when it begins to undertake the labours of charity to

which it may be invited by the Bishop, or the parish priests or the people. Moreover among these labours it will content itself with those which are proportioned to the strength of its members, especially in the beginning, the Institute not having yet taken deep root. It appears to me that the spirit pervading your whole letter is in perfect harmony with these views of mine.

Confident of your approval, I propose to take up my residence at Trent after Easter or at the latest after Pentecost, and to remain there for some months, that is, as long as may be necessary to make a satisfactory commencement of the work to which your pastoral zeal invites me. Subsequently I shall reside alternately here and at Trent according to the requirements of the two communities.

I must crave your indulgence for writing at such length. However, I deemed it a duty to give you full information before making any commencement. Renewing the expression of my gratitude and begging your blessing.

I remain,

your humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

XLV.

TO MR. AMBROSE PHILLIPS AT GARENDON PARK.

*He speaks of the Ascribed Members of the Institute, and of
a foundation in England.*

Calvario di Domodossola,
September 6th, 1831.

Beloved friend and brother in the charity of our Lord,

I was greatly consoled by your letter written on the feast of our Mother's Assumption. It gave me the greatest consolation, because it brought news of yourself which I hardly expected to receive so soon, and still more because the sentiments contained therein cannot fail to secure for you, by God's grace, a life full of the peace of our Lord, and bring you unto eternal salvation. Indeed, there is nothing else that can afford us true and solid consolation, except to live detached from earthly things with our heart in heaven, keeping ever in remembrance God and our Lord Jesus Christ and His dear Mother, our glory and our joy. I thank God therefore and congratulate you on these sentiments, and I exhort you to persevere in all your good and useful designs, with the aid of God's grace and His holy inspirations.

I also thank you for the confidence you repose in me. The greatest token of your friendship is this opening of your whole heart, the disclosing of that conflict which you experience within yourself. This conflict, however, is necessary in order to triumph over human misery and attain to the perfection to which you feel yourself called. Ah, my dear Mr. Phillips, this is inevitable, for our nature is corrupt to the core. The germ of pride is innate in us, and is indeed the most deeply-rooted of our propensities;

it is an ulcer for which there is no remedy, if it be not healed by a miracle of divine grace and the co-operation of our own will. I would therefore counsel and urge you to seek all possible occasions of humbling yourself and acquiring a holy contempt of self. Endeavour to take the lowest place among God's creatures and make yourself the servant of all for Christ's sake, with most generous charity towards all men, but especially towards the poorest, most abject and afflicted; for in them you will honour Christ and follow the example of Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. This is the more needful in your case, for as God has bestowed riches on you and placed you in a high position, you might easily be blinded by the vanity of the world. On the other hand you have more leisure than others wherewith to serve God in the person of your neighbour and gain great merit for your own soul. It is this self-humiliation charity and gentleness that will give efficacy to your zeal if God has chosen you (as I believe He has) to be His instrument for the good of souls and the true welfare of your country. I cannot think of your country, once the Island of Saints and even now so worthy of esteem, without being moved almost to tears. But the evil spirit would never have succeeded in perverting it so cruelly had he not found that pride and the love of gain, the source of all misfortune, had crept into men's hearts. God has given you a great grace in bestowing on you light to perceive the *perfection* to which you are called, and the will to pursue it as in duty bound.

To come now to our little Society, you may not be aware that its foundation is the *perfection* of our own souls, and its great object is mutual assistance in the attainment of so noble an end. Hence the Society necessarily gives admission to all those who ardently aspire after perfection, even though divine Providence should leave them in the world. Such is your case, as I understand by your letter that your marriage will shortly take place. I trust that God will grant you every happiness, and that

the companion whom He has chosen for you may be one with you in the Lord, and not only increase your happiness in this world but also help you to secure eternal felicity. I repeat that in our little Society there is room for persons living in the world, provided they do not live according to the principles of the world. Closely united to the religious are these *Ascribed Members*, who are joined to us by every tie of fraternal charity, and participate in our good works. Nay, they are really members of our Society, and must labour, as far as their state in life will permit, in all that appertains to the glory of God and the love of our neighbour. I say this for your information, and perhaps also for your consolation, as God has moved you to take so great an interest in our Society. One of our principles, moreover, entails a readiness "to do anything whatever that pertains to the glory of God and the love of our neighbour in any country whatever, provided the services of the Society are invited, and to be content with everything."

As to means of subsistence in England, God knows what we require. Do not be anxious, for we are content with little, and even if there were no provision made for us at all, we should come all the same, if the Bishop desired it. We should live on what we have of our own as long as it lasted, and then we should trust to Providence; for none of those who work for God have ever died of hunger. Our Lord has no lack of granaries for the support of those whom He calls and hires to work in His field. But I thank you with all my heart for your zeal in promoting this work of charity, which with God's blessing will produce great fruit in England, and in particular for having spoken to the Bishop and offering to mention the matter to that fervent Catholic, the Earl of Shrewsbury. I have no doubt that, thanks to you, we shall be able to make a foundation in England. That you may know how matters stand with us,—our dear Don Gentili is here with us at Calvario, and I have some others whom I am preparing for the English Mission, when and as it shall please God. I may say that

there is nothing dearer to my heart than this work. I enclose a letter from Don Gentili, in order that you may see what he thinks of it. The blessing of God is evidently on our work.

We have lately made a foundation at Trent, whither we were invited by the Bishop. I think it is significant that Providence should have called us to this city, in which the last Ecumenical Council was assembled to condemn the heresies of modern times. By God's grace and by it alone everything is going on well. I have received other invitations, but I do not wish to attempt too much, being guided in this by the advice of our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI. It seems appropriate that this pope should send us, since he is a namesake of the great pontiff who brought England to the faith. I trust that in less than two years we shall be ready. This is the time for prayer and making preparations, you on your part, we on ours. Above all we must pray. In addition to our private devotions, public prayers are offered in our houses to the end that God may bless all that you have in mind, according to His good pleasure, wherein we must repose; and in mentioning your intentions I refer, in the first place, to the salvation of those nearest to you, namely, your father and your family.

The disquietude which prevails in England and elsewhere cannot fail to contribute finally to the triumph of the Holy Church. For my part, I anticipate new and unheard-of glories for the Church of Jesus Christ, in fulfilment of those prophecies of the Saints which have not been perfectly fulfilled. The glory of Jesus Christ even in this world will exceed all human thought and hope. Nevertheless I should not venture to call this the *millennium* of the Apocalypse, which you speak of. God knows all things. The times and moments are known to Him, and in the words of Job, the Lord "has brought hidden things to light." Let us keep to His holy law: here we have everything. Above all, we must pray. In the Holy Sacrifice which I, though unworthy, celebrate

every morning, you, my dear Mr. Phillips, are constantly remembered. I will send you a short description of our little society in case you should wish to show it to anyone according to your discretion. May Jesus and Mary bless you. I am writing to you during the Novena for the Nativity of our dear Mother. Adieu.

Believe me to be always yours in Jesus and Mary,

A. R.

XLVI.

TO MGR. GRASSER, BISHOP OF VERONA.

He refutes an objection raised against the Institute of Charity.

Trent,

November 5th, 1831.

On my arrival at Trent, I immediately called on the Bishop and delivered your letter and message. Permit me now to explain by letter what I was unable to say by word of mouth, owing to the shortness of my stay at Verona. I have already said that the objection raised against the Institute of Charity on the ground that it undertakes too many works of charity is based upon a false supposition, but I had no opportunity of giving my reasons. The false supposition is that this Institute undertakes indiscriminately all works of charity: this is not correct. The Institute has in view only one definite end, the sanctification of its own members. In this respect it differs widely from the Society of Jesus, which has two principal objects, the sanctification of its own members and that of others. The end of our Institute is more simple, because it has for its principal and ultimate object simply its own sanctification. Hence the Institute is of its very nature a *contemplative* Institute, and its members lead a quiet and private life, such as should be the life of a simple priest or of a layman who aspires to the perfection of the Gospel. It is an error, unhappily widely diffused in our times, to believe that the sacerdotal office necessarily involves the care of souls. On the contrary, it is only the Bishop who is pastor in virtue of his office. Priests, unless called upon by the Bishop to undertake the care of souls, have no other mission than

the offering of prayer and sacrifice for themselves and the people. The life which befits a layman and a simple priest is a life of humility, retirement and obedience, and consequently of prayer and study. This type of virtue and mode of life form the basis and the true object of our Institute, which is composed of private persons associated for the purpose of mutual sanctification. It is the end determined by God Himself, nor was it in my power to make any deviation from this plan, and the addition of any work of charity would require a special manifestation of the Divine will, an extraordinary inspiration. These are things for Saints, not for me, a miserable sinner; and even if God has sent extraordinary vocations to sinners He has sent none to me.

It is true that we cannot tie the hands of God. Laymen and priests who attend to their own sanctification, according to the advice of the Apostle,—*take heed to thyself*—may be called by God to the accomplishment of some work of charity, and this not only by extraordinary means but in the ordinary way. For since all men, and especially those who aspire to perfection, are bound to show charity to their neighbour, it is evident that whenever our neighbour asks for aid which we can give him, his request implies an obligation or at least a counsel. Thus it is the duty of all Christians, under certain circumstances, to devote their strength and energies to labours of charity; and this *moral necessity* is more apparent in the case of priests and others who aspire to perfection. A refusal on their part would be tantamount to neglecting their own sanctification, their one and only aim. On the other hand, there is no obligation, and I venture to add no counsel (except in the case of a special vocation) to go in search of the necessities of our neighbour, for in the Gospel the neighbour whom we are to assist is represented as a sick man found by the Samaritan on the roadside, not sought out. Jesus Christ Himself led a hidden life for thirty years in order to teach us a lesson on the subject of false zeal; and even when He entered on

His public ministry He restricted Himself to the things pertaining to His mission. He did not seek out the infirm in order to cure them, they were brought to Him. Indeed, the woman of Canaan was only heard after much importunity. ("I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—St. Matt. xv.) Therefore, when our neighbour asks and entreats our aid, we are bound, or at least counselled, to give it even as private persons: and in these cases there is a manifestation of God's will and a mission. Now these are the works of charity which the Institute undertakes, being constrained thereto by the very nature of its one and simple aim.

You will say that the Institute has no definite sphere of action and consequently assumes all offices indiscriminately. But we must remember that no one can impose laws on Divine Providence, to which alone it belongs to determine the works of charity for each individual, and that we have no right arbitrarily to exclude a good work which we are bound or counselled to undertake through the force of external circumstances. It suffices that we should undertake it with prudence. This applies to the condition of all Christians and all priests; and what authority have we for restricting the law of God or setting limits to the Gospel? Is not charity of its very nature universal? Can I arbitrarily decide to fulfil the law of charity in part, and leave the rest undone? If Providence has deigned to employ me in a particular work, I am certainly dispensed from employing myself in other matters beyond my strength; but I could not make a rule of not going beyond certain definite limits without restricting the law of the Gospel, or in other words, without making a Gospel of my own. Much less could I impose such restrictions on others.

But this is tantamount to condemning all other Religious Orders! No, certainly not. God forbid! I do say, indeed, that the holy Founders of Orders were endowed with supernatural light and an extraordinary mission; and in saying this I intend to pay the highest tribute to those

Orders. I doubt not that the Marchesa di Canossa, for whom I have the highest esteem, would be acting under an extraordinary inspiration if she founded an Institute of Brothers of Charity, especially after the institution of the Daughters of Charity, which is evidently God's work. But my misery precludes such favours: I can only creep along the beaten track and even then with how many imperfections God only knows. The Institute of Charity would not proceed so well in this diocese and that of Novara, much less would it prosper, were it not for the goodness of my companions.

Our condition therefore is that of laymen and secular priests. We have the same obligations as they have: it is our duty, as it is theirs, to undertake *with prudence* such works of charity as are offered to us by Divine Providence. Here, however, there is a great advantage in belonging to a Congregation, in which the individual member is not judge in his own cause, but is directed by his Superior, and does not receive a responsible charge until the Superior decides that such is the will of God, as made manifest by external circumstances. A second notable advantage of our living together is that we are able to render one another mutual assistance, and prepare ourselves better in order to follow the will of God, not our own caprice or inclination. A third advantage is that an association can, if God pleases, exercise charity on a more extended scale than is possible to isolated individuals.

With regard to this subject of external works of charity, I remember your saying you could not understand how discipline could be maintained if members were permitted to live apart from the community. But it must be borne in mind that the members living in community form the nucleus of the Society, and that those outside are merely accessory. They are simply auxiliaries, useful for certain works of charity which might perhaps prove detrimental to the religious spirit of the community. The Society could exist without such assistants, but a little extra help will do it no harm. Moreover if any

one outside desires to participate in the spiritual advantages of the Society, charity forbids our excluding him, for this exclusion would be one of those arbitrary principles to which I am a mortal enemy. Thus it is that external members enter into the plan of our Society, and are, as it were, a consequence of its spirit.

I beg you, Monsignor, to excuse this long letter. Begging your blessing, with all my heart I declare myself to be your humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

XLVII.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

The Institute must not seek the patronage of the great, but place its confidence in God.

Trent,

November 27th, 1831.

My beloved brother and friend in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom alone be honour and glory!

Forgive me if I caused you pain by my last letter. I am glad of this occasion of asking your pardon for having pained you, though in part involuntarily. In fact, if you will read over calmly the expressions of censure which I used in that letter, you will see the words and phrases were throughout expressive of doubt, as *I fear, I doubt, if you are in fault*, and the like. They were, therefore, conditional, and since the conditions are not verified, the censures do not apply to you in the least. On the other hand, do not think that I passed judgment on your conduct; I was only *afraid*, and appearances gave me reason to fear. If, then, you consider that I erred in manifesting my *doubts* concerning your line of action, I not only humbly ask your pardon, but willingly submit to the penance you may see fit to impose upon me, and promise to make any amends you may desire.

After this preamble, I beg you to consider that I was in a most painful position, more than a fortnight having passed without letters from Calvario, though both you and Gentili had had instructions to write to me, and I myself had written twice. Consider also that if the necessity of your leaving Calvario was *most pressing*, as you tell me (inasmuch as a single day's delay might have

occasioned the occupation. of the house by the soldiers), and you were obliged to leave suddenly, still you might have asked Gentili to write to me at once, instead of waiting to write from Turin when the affair was already concluded. Very likely, you wished to give me tidings of the happy termination of the difficulty without distressing me by the news of the danger to the house. But, my dear brother, I would rather not be treated with so much consideration and delicacy. I wish to be informed of everything as it occurs, good or bad. Then with regard to your going to Turin, I do not know whether I should have recommended the step, even had the matter been as urgent as you say; consequently, I cannot as yet approve your action, because I am still in the dark as to your reasons. *Possibly I might have preferred to risk a military occupation of the house, rather than betake myself to Turin for the sake of obtaining an invidious privilege, a thing which is, speaking generally, contrary to the spirit of our Institute.* I do not know whether you feel the force of this observation, but I wish you to do so. It is necessary for me to have further information, and I beg you to tell me what grounds you had for fearing that the house would be seized immediately.

You say that you do not see what harm could come of the king's knowing and approving of our Community at Calvario. My dear brother, whether good or harm could come of it God alone knows. This I will say, that our union is of its very nature *humble, private and hidden*, and that if it seeks the approbation of princes without necessity, it is not true to its own spirit, which is a spirit of confidence in God and in His ineffable Providence. Yes, even in this matter our mode of action must be characterized by *humility*, that is, we must leave all to God; we must avoid as much as possible all relations with the great ones of the earth except when necessity, that is to say, our duty, requires us to hold intercourse with them. If we had sought this approbation we should have taken a false step and should be *on the wrong road*.

It is in this sense that you must take my remarks. Either you agree with me that we ought to rely on God alone, simply doing our duty, without in any way seeking or courting patronage—and in this case what I have said does not apply to you; or else you are still inclined to put yourself forward and gain favour—and if so you should curb this misguided zeal and turn it by God's help in a different direction.

In fine, I entreat you to take my admonition in good part, and not to misinterpret what I have said. Do you not know me yet? Do you not know that I seek only what is right? This, thanks be to God, is my only desire: therefore put a right construction on my words. Do not be cast down or disheartened, but derive profit from my advice for yourself and for those confided to your care, for whom you will certainly have to render an account. Therefore "serve the Lord," as the Scripture says, "with a perfect and sincere heart."

Here, with God's blessing, all goes well. Our companions are increasing in number, and I think also in virtue.

Tell Molinari I hope he will try to do well all he has to do. Let him write to me sometimes, not for form's sake, but to tell me all about himself with freedom and simplicity.

Let us love one another and pray without ceasing.

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

XLVIII.

TO THE ABBÉ LÖWENBRUCK AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On confidence in God rather than in man.

Trent,

February 11th, 1832.

My beloved friend and brother in our Lord, who is our Salvation and our Life! May His grace be with you and your companions!

I thank you for the news sent from Milan and from Arona. As for what the Cardinal said do not let that trouble you. It is in God that we put our trust. We should offer Him an affront by distrusting Him. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened." However if the words of men cause us disquietude let us enter into ourselves and we shall find that we have been placing our confidence and hope in man; he who desires to be protected by God alone is not disturbed by what men say. But let us have recourse to the consoling thought, that for us all good is comprised in doing the will of God, in perfecting and sanctifying our own souls. What peace and constancy shall we not acquire! Then shall we be indifferent with regard to all that Providence may have in store for us. May God do with us and with our Society whatever it may please Him; we shall be equally content whatever may befall us. Is it His pleasure that our Society should remain lowly, obscure, insignificant? Blessed be His holy Name: in His eyes (I mean what I say) the society is more lovable the smaller it is, because it is more likely to be humble and less exposed to the praises of men, which too often corrupt the heart. Is it God's pleasure that our Society should be contradicted, opposed and persecuted?

Be it so, provided it be not on account of our worthlessness our foolishness, our presumption, provided in fine it be not our own fault. On the other hand, does God will that our little association should take root and flourish? May He be equally blessed! Let these be our sentiments; they will render us tranquil or at any rate courageous in the hour of temptation. Call to mind the resolutions and promises you made at Trent, of which the dread Judge will assuredly demand an account. However, the abundance of the Divine mercy is being poured forth upon us as far as external gifts are concerned; I would fain say the same of the interior gifts were it not that my imperfections and infinite misery offer continual resistance to the goodness of God.

Tell Gentili that the prospects of the English mission are good and that he shall know all in due time; for the present it is a question of prayer. Let him pray and get others to do the same. I embrace all my dear Brothers tenderly. Tell them to pray earnestly for the salvation of our souls. How full I am of misery! Nevertheless I place my trust in the Lord; He who listens to the voice of the wretched will listen also to my voice. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee." Pray earnestly therefore, pray all of you for your Brother in Christ,

A. R.

XLIX.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

The necessity of cultivating an interior spirit.

Trent,

March 19th, 1832.

My dear brother and friend in our Lord, in whom may we be united for ever. Amen.

I approve of your project for the Sisters of Providence, but at the same time I most earnestly entreat you to be faithful in keeping the rules I have given you: act with all possible prudence, with perfect truthfulness and obedience, and hold yourself in readiness to give up any work that you have begun. You should confirm your resolution on this last point, and convince yourself fully that the way of holy obedience was the path trodden by the Saints. Keep before your eyes the example of the great Apostle, St. Francis Xavier, who was ready to leave all the good he was doing at the first sign of his Superior's will; he would actually have done so, indeed, if he had not died before the command to leave his great mission in the East could reach him. So long as you do not place yourself in this state of *indifference*, so long as you do not work with such holy indifference and self-control as to be ready to relinquish the work in hand, believe that you have reason to be afraid of yourself, afraid that your work may not really be acceptable to God. What would it avail you to labour hard and do a great deal, if on the Day of Judgment you found that you had done nothing really pleasing to God? In the midst of your labours and toils examine yourself seriously as to whether you are not perhaps harbouring the wish to

appear a great man, an active, enterprising, celebrated missionary, trying to make people talk about you and, in fine, to gain renown. What a terrible danger this is! It is so easy to be deceived by a false zeal, which really springs from vanity and pride. Let us fear, let us be full of fear, in all that has the colour of the glory of God and the good of souls; and lest we should be tricked some day, let us try to fly as much as possible from the praises of men and from thoughts of self-complacency, and *sincerely* desire to remain in obscurity, neglected and even despised. If we really wish it, we shall find opportunities of practising humility and even of concealing the favours of God. Finally, think of the words of our Lord in the 7th chapter of St. Matthew, from which we learn that we may actually lose our souls while doing great things in the service of Christ. "Many shall say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name and wrought many miracles in Thy name?" Deluded beings! They had trusted to a false zeal. "And then I will declare to them, I never knew you." This is a great lesson for us: that not only must we do good, but do it *well*, if we would gain merit and save our own souls. And how does St. Paul describe the labours of a missionary who does not act according to truth and justice? As a man who runs, and does not know where he is going, as one beating the air and grasping nothing. But the holy Apostle did not act thus. "I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty, I so fight, not as one beating the air."

And why was this? Let us listen and tremble. "Lest perchance when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway." How are we to escape this danger? By keeping to the safe path of obedience. We must build our house upon the rock; and our Lord tells us that it is not the man who accomplishes great things who builds his house on the rock, but the man who is faithful to His words. "Therefore, every one that heareth these My words and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock." May God grant you this true

wisdom! Distrust your own judgment; you incur a great responsibility by following your own impulses. If you do so, you will never be at peace, you will never have a tranquil conscience. I beg you to give me a minute account of yourself frequently, and especially with regard to your dispositions on these important points. For the rest, may God bless the work you have begun.

I am rejoiced at the good news from Calvario. Embrace all my dear companions for me. Here all goes on well, wonderfully well. Love me in the Lord, as I love you with all my heart in Him, to whom be all honour and glory.

A R.

L.

TO MR. AMBROSE PHILLIPS.

*On the false reports in circulation concerning the Institute
of Charity.*

Domodossola,

August 17th, 1832.

Beloved friend in Jesus and Mary, our consolation and our joy!

Although your letter of the 2nd inst. contained some very unpleasant intelligence, it gave me even more pleasure than your previous letters had done. How deeply indebted I am to you, my dear Phillips, for your sincerity and the frankness with which you treat me! May God bless you for it, as He will do most surely, for He always blesses pure and candid souls. Do not be surprised, however, if I appear unconcerned about the suspicions which are being circulated by P. D. They are horrible certainly, but I believe he is acting from a good motive, and is under a misapprehension with regard to the Institute of Charity and myself. I feel sure that as soon as he knows the true state of the case this good priest will retract all that he has said and written against us. In any case, I can hardly take these suspicions seriously. They are so wild and incoherent, so inconsistent, that they cannot last for any length of time. It is true that the devil sometimes, by divine permission, plays us some fine tricks, as was seen in the spreading of calumnies against men (such as St. Ignatius and his companions), the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose. The evil one only seeks to hinder or delay the works that are undertaken for God's glory, which are hateful to him, and

this English mission must enrage him. But I reflect that the devil does all this only by the permission of God, in so far as God permits him and no further. Therefore I remain quiet and tranquil, knowing that not the slightest ground for these horrible suspicions has been given either by myself or by any of my companions. And I leave myself entirely in the hands of Divine Providence.

However, in order to disperse the cloud raised by the enemy of our souls, it would be well to know the *grounds* on which P. D. bases his suspicions. If the suspicions are without any foundation they are not worth consideration, but if P. D. has any reasons for his questions he is bound in conscience for the love of truth, to state them. If they were disclosed to me I should, surely, have no difficulty in disproving them; for the grounds must be false that give rise to suspicions so preposterous. But we must wait for Cardinal Weld's answer; he will no doubt obtain the most reliable information. Were it necessary I could give you clear proofs on the highest authority, which could not fail to drive away even the shadow of these suspicions. I do not, however, think it advisable to make any defence, as we should both lose much time, and my self-love would probably be roused at being obliged to repel imputations so horrible, so absurd and ill-founded. I content myself, therefore, with the reflection that in your prudence you will not give credit to empty phantoms or assertions without proofs.

Meantime, by the mercy of God, the Institute of Charity is prospering both here and in the diocese of Trent. There is more work to be done than we have strength to do; and all this under the protection of the bishops. We shall also, please God, open the mission in your country which I have so much at heart. Meanwhile, let us thank God, who is preparing the means; He will also, if it please Him, remove the difficulties which the enemy of all good is raising against us.

Our dear Gentili is making great progress in virtue and perfection. He is not with us at the present moment,

but I will give him your news on his return. No doubt he too will be amazed at the strange charges brought against us, but I am sure he will be amused rather than disquieted. Continue to pray, dear friend. It is by means of prayer that we learn the will of God and gain strength to accomplish it. I have confidence in the prayers of so many good people who are praying for us, and for the English mission in particular. Above all, let us have recourse to our dear Mother Mary, who is the channel of all graces; and assuredly we shall be heard, for Jesus can refuse nothing to His Mother. I embrace you in Jesus and Mary, and hope soon to receive news of you.

A. R.

LI.

TO MGR. SCAVINI, VICAR GENERAL OF NOVARA.

On the occasion of Don Pagani's joining the Institute.

Stresa,

August 14th, 1836.

Delighted as I am at the coming of Don Pagani, I am sincerely sorry that you should be inconvenienced by his departure; and I am the more grateful to you for allowing him to follow his vocation. I trust, Monsignor, that your kindness and liberality will be continued towards an Institute that is still in its infancy, an Institute which came into existence in your hands and has been ever since nourished by you with maternal solicitude. Everything depends on the beginning. If the beginning is good, if God sends us good stones for the foundation we shall be able to build a good house; and for this house we shall always be indebted to the diocese of Novara and to those who govern it with so much zeal and prudence. We have a small Novitiate here and I am much pleased with it, but we have only eight novices.

I beg you to excuse me for disturbing you and accept the expressions of our profound respect.

Your humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

LII.

TO DON MOLINARI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He announces the Approval of the Institute by the Holy See.

Stresa,

December 25th, 1838.

Dear friend and brother in our Lord,

How good is the Child Jesus! On the very day of His birth He sends me the news of the Approval of our Institute, by the Congregation, with the privileges of Regulars, given in Rome on the 20th inst. Let us then exult in the Lord, inasmuch as He is born amongst us and with Him this our own little Institute. Communicate this consoling news to all our dear brothers, that they may hasten to thank the Divine Mercy. I will write at greater length to tell you what devotions are to be offered in thanksgiving by the whole Institute. I embrace all in the infinite charity of our Lord.

A. R.

LIII.

TO CARDINAL CASTRACANE AT ROME.

He expresses his gratitude to the Cardinal, who had acted as Promoter of the Cause.

Stresa,

December 26th, 1838.

The letter in which your Eminence deigned to communicate to me the decision of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, at their meeting of the 20th inst, reached me on Christmas Day! itself, and I received it as a present from the Child Jesus. I cannot find words in which to thank you for the kindness and untiring zeal by which you have brought our cause to a happy issue in spite of considerable opposition. The Institute of Charity, as long as it shall please the Lord to preserve it in His Church, will retain an undying remembrance of your Eminence, as of a signal benefactor, and a lasting gratitude. As for me, I have nothing to offer in return for so much kind solicitude, save my poor prayers. I shall not cease to beseech God to enrich you with all good things, nor will my companions fail to pray daily for this intention, as, indeed, they have already begun to do.

I take this opportunity of begging your Eminence to accept my most sincere wishes for all heavenly blessings on the occasion of the New Year; and with the most profound esteem, devotion and gratitude I have the honour to remain,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

SECTION III.

Letters to Members of the Institute of Charity.

I.

TO DON GIOVANNI BOSELLI AT MILAN.

A religious vocation is a gift from God. Evangelical poverty consists in giving to God all that we have, be it little or much.

Calvario,

Feast of St. Athanasius, 1828.

Let us adore God in all His ways! As for your desire to come here directly after Pentecost I can but repeat what I said before. I cannot call you, because I myself need a call; if you are called as well as I, then come. He who should bid you come, would be responsible for the step. Were I to say "come," I should take this responsibility upon myself and should be deceiving you. If God call you He is your surety, and He is faithful and true. Let us obey His voice and trust in His mercy.

With regard to what you say about worldly substance and the means of subsistence, be at peace. I repeat what I said: let us trust to the care of Providence. Though you have little to offer to God, it will be acceptable if it be your *all*. The poor widow offered little, but her two mites were accepted because it was all she had. St. Peter when he left his boat and nets gave up little and yet he could say with confidence to our Lord: "We have

left all things." But we must remember that our *all* comprises both our present and our future, not merely what we have now but also anything that may come to us afterwards. If your offering is made in this spirit, trust in Providence. For the rest, I say again: imagine that you are alone in the world with God and come to your decision in His presence. Thus you will not be putting your trust in men and least of all in me. The counsel I give you is that you be perfect, nothing else, for that counsel comes from Jesus Christ. All the rest, too, must come from the Spirit of Christ "diffused in our hearts and crying therein, with confidence, Abba, Father." If the Holy Spirit should inspire you to come, I should be very pleased to have you and Francesco before Pentecost.

If you decide to come, do not think of remaining permanently, but only for a time to make a trial for two or three months, or even less. God Himself will make known to you whether you ought to prolong your stay. Thus you will be able to say with truth to Fr. Rector, that you are going to make a spiritual retreat and nothing more. God will not expect more than this; for the resolution He requires, perpetual, irrevocable, unconditional, is simply this: to will to be perfect. Let us proceed slowly until we know His will. Thus do we live from day to day and in eternity at the same time; in eternity as regards the desire of perfection, and from day to day as regards the means employed. But we must be indifferent to all the means and not refuse any of them, for everything is good that comes from God. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world."

Now a few words for Bonetti. Do not be troubled about the lack of means of subsistence. God will provide. What I have said to Don Boselli applies equally to you: offer all you have, that is sufficient. Consult your spiritual director and do as he tells you. If God sends you, I welcome you already with all my heart. Let us continue to pray to Jesus Christ our Redeemer and to Our Lady of Sorrows, and let us serve our Lord with gladness. We

must humble ourselves without ceasing and purify our souls. Let us be insatiable in our desire of justice, and may this be the one object of our aspirations. May God implant in us this justice! He alone can do so, and then we shall no longer be put to confusion. "Then I shall not be confounded when I shall have regarded all Thy commandments."

Let us love one another; this is the badge of our Lord's disciples; a blessed badge indeed! Would that we might be one with Jesus in God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit to whom be glory for ever and ever!

A. R.

II.

TO THE DEACON, GIACOMO MOLINARI, AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

On the greatness of the Deacon's office and its responsibilities.

Rome,

December 25th, 1829.

The tidings of your being called to Novara by your superiors to receive the Diaconate, was most consoling. By this time you will have already received "the white stole from the hand of God, the raiment of salvation, the garb of joy and the dalmatic of justice." How beautiful are these vestments, how precious these ornaments! Dear indeed must they be to one who has received from God the light to discern their infinite value. When you return to Calvario, we shall have you strengthened by the Holy Spirit, with new vigour to resist the evil one, with fresh zeal for the glory of God's House and for the salvation of souls. How ardently do I wish you all the gifts of Stephen and of Laurence! I have not failed and do not cease to offer, as you desire, my poor and most unworthy prayers to the Lord, that you may be able to support and protect the Church of God (like the Ark carried by the Levites of old) with the *adornment of holiness, divine doctrine and perfect example*, for this is what the bishop enjoined on you before laying his hands on you. Ah, dear Brother, the knowledge of this our dignity is enough to humble and confound us before God who has so exalted us, and is enough to make us tremble. I am sure you turned to profit the time of the retreat, in order to impress more deeply on your mind the importance of the new state, the new dignity,

the new burden which you were going to receive, so as to make yourself worthy of the same by purifying your heart more and more and giving yourself more completely to God.

I can imagine that on your return to the Sacred Mount you will be more than ever solicitous for the good order and adornment of the church, so that everything (as far as our poverty will permit) may be bright and clean and suitable to God's House, and that the Divine worship may be celebrated with devotion and exactness. I can imagine your returning with fresh ardour to the work of instructing the children, looking upon it as an office attached to your grade in the ministry; because, besides ministering at the altar and giving baptism, a Deacon is required to preach should the Bishop desire it. Endeavour, therefore, to infuse the Spirit of God and His Word into the tender hearts of those for whom is the Kingdom of Heaven. Unite yourself more and more closely in spirit with our dear Don Giovanni [Löwenbruck], with that humility and submission which are so dear to God and which are never excessive; and be dependent on him, even in the smallest things.

Your affection prompts you to manifest a desire for my return. Believe me, dear Brother, that I too desire it most ardently, but I must be guided by the will of God. I have remained here up to the present contrary to my expectations; and shall be detained some time longer. I cannot hope to embrace you before the end of February or the beginning of March. You must know that it is for the sake of Calvario that I remain here. I shall hope to bring you many spiritual blessings. In the meantime pray all of you for me, that is for the sanctification of my soul, because my one desire is to secure my eternal salvation. "The time is short."

Adieu. I embrace you tenderly in Jesus and Mary. May they be ever in our hearts.

A. R.

III.

TO LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

*His joy at finding himself once more at Calvario in the
midst of a fervent Community.*

Calvario di Domodossola,

May 9th, 1830.

My dear friend and brother in Christ,

I reached this Sacred Mount on the 13th of this month to the great joy of my companions and myself. I cannot describe the consolation of the first embrace after so long a separation, a consolation infused by the charity of our Lord in whom we are one heart and one soul. Count Mellerio will have given you the particulars of my journey, as I wrote him a long account. With regard to this little Community, let me tell you that my expectations were more than realized. I found good discipline and order thanks to the care taken by our dear Don Giovanni; perfect harmony, a spirit of fervour and obedience on the part of our beloved Deacon and the Brothers, and a humility and charity which are plainly the work of God. Our external relations have also been blessed by Providence. It is evident that great spiritual good is being done to the people of these valleys, where God has His hidden treasures and souls capable of high perfection. There is always a great concourse here, there are great expectations and incessant demands on our charity: but the labourers are few. How I wish you were here! You could certainly, if it pleased God, do much good, in humility and in secret. I delight in this humble condition, and this obscurity is my greatest joy. My only fear is that it cannot

last long. But let us leave all to God and our Mother Mary, under whose standard we fight.

On Tuesday I must go to the Cardinal of Novara, and shall take with me our Deacon who is to be ordained this Pentecost. He approaches the Priesthood with feelings of awe and only under obedience, for he knows the weight of the responsibility and is humbled by the greatness of the dignity. Even after his superiors at Novara had decided the question, he still waited to speak to me, asking to be excused a little while if I thought proper. But taking into consideration the injunction of his superiors and his own excellent dispositions, and finding him proficient in sacred learning, it seemed to me that the will of God was clearly shown, and I told him not to raise difficulties but to obey. "*Cani sunt sensus hominis.*" I will write again to you at greater length; let this suffice for the present.

Write to me about your studies, your dispositions with regard to the service of God, and the state of your soul. Let me have news also of our friends in Rome; kindly remember me especially to Barola, Terasconi and Giuliani.

Speaking of Barola (to whom I shall soon write) I left a little present for you with him, feeling sure that you would accept it in the spirit in which it was offered. It was a piece of advice about the introduction of religious subjects in conversation. If we mention such matters (especially in speaking to persons of position or with regard to things obvious or not altogether unfamiliar) we should do so in such a way as not to seem to be giving information, but merely recalling for mutual edification things known to all. In this way our humility is not endangered and we show regard for our companions by giving them credit for knowledge; indeed, they often know as much as we do, and more. I felt bound in duty to speak to you on this point, but I had great difficulty in mentioning it, and words failed me when I made the attempt. This embarrassment on my part was a defect, certainly, for there should be greater freedom between such loving friends and brothers in the Lord as we are; but

it is partly due to the fear that if I try to correct others, they will say openly or in secret: "Physician, heal thyself." And well do I know that I deserve such a retort. But, however that may be, you will know how to profit by my remark (which is at any rate well meant), and take greater care in conversation to avoid any phrase that may lead people to suppose that you think them ignorant of spiritual things; or at least you will say what is necessary with greater humility and modesty, for these virtues always admit of increase.

Tell me also when you write about your promotion to the Diaconate, which I presume will take place at Pentecost. Our little Community will unite in praying for you and for our Deacon, that the spirit of God may descend upon you both and strengthen you to persevere and work out your holy vocation. I have greatly at heart the doctrines I am trying to disseminate, believing this to be the will of God, and I shall be glad if you will tell me how the *Essay on the Origin of Ideas* is received and what is thought of it by competent persons. Remember me to my friends the Jesuits, especially P. Piancini and P. Rossini. Continue to love me. All here send you their good wishes. Don Giovanni has his hands full of work, but will reply to your letter when he has time. Adieu once more *in osculo sancto*.

A. R.

IV.

TO LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

The manner in which he should direct an aspirant to the Institute.

Monte Calvario,
June 4th, 1830.

My dear brother and friend in Jesus Christ,

Your letter has given me much pleasure, because it seems to me that God has bestowed upon you a holy fervour; and after reading it, I could not but hasten to prostrate myself before the Blessed Sacrament in order to thank our Lord and to offer my poor prayers for you and for myself. As for your Irish fellow-student I think his case may be an instance of the care of that Providence to which we must wholly abandon ourselves according to the spirit of our Institute. With regard to giving the Constitutions to your friend to read, if you think him sufficiently mature and capable of understanding them, lend them to him by all means; warn him, however, to observe a discreet silence as to their contents. Tell him, also, not to read them here and there or hurriedly, but with order and leisurely. Let him reflect on everything but especially on the spirit contained in their ascetical principles, for the spirit is everything. As for the material development which the Institute may acquire in course of time and which is described in the latter portion of the book, I would have you take notice that this consideration might give play to the imagination and lessen the spirit of humility, of retirement and of complete surrender of self to God. It might even arouse the spirit of *enterprise*, which should be utterly repugnant to us, as being characteristic of worldly

men, an effect of self love, and totally opposed to the simplicity of the Gospel and the grace of Jesus Christ. It is necessary therefore to be well grounded in the humility and self-contempt inculcated in the first part of the book of the Constitutions. We must never forget that our model and beloved teacher, after Jesus Christ, is Mary His mother, who of all creatures led the most hidden, poor and quiet life, and yet has been glorified by God above all creatures; and while she left the care of herself entirely to Him, He wrought in her greater wonders of His grace than in any other mortal. Rightly is she considered by the Church as the type of wisdom, for there is no higher wisdom than to live tranquilly in God and to rejoice in Him with full confidence in His mercy, rendering heartfelt praise and thanks for all the works of His Providence, that is for all things without exception. I hope your friend will have a tender devotion to our dear Mother to whom our little Institute is consecrated in a special manner. We wish to be all hers, since we have a right to this in virtue of the last testament of Jesus, whereby He has made us her children. My dear Gentili, we shall fear nothing with such a mother and leader at our head. Let us be of one mind in this devotion, for it is sweet to have full sympathy in these things.

Don Giovanni salutes and embraces you *in Domino*. He is indefatigable. To-day, I have not seen him since five o'clock, the hour for meditation. He was starting then (having already said Mass) to attend some sick calls. He did not even return for dinner, and when he does come home he will find other sick calls awaiting him. His penitents in the meantime have been waiting for him in vain. The other day a poor woman, who had walked for ten hours in order to make her confession, was unable to enter the confessional owing to the crowd of penitents and remained fasting till evening, never thinking that it would be too late to communicate. Blessed be God who has treasures hidden from the world!

Molinari is at Novara for the ordination. On Monday

he will return a priest, to our joy not less than his own. We pray for you and Molinari every evening, and I remember you both specially in the Mass.

Your reproof is but too well deserved; I had already acknowledged my pusillanimity. It really springs as I told you from the sense of my own unworthiness, to which I was loth to add the temerity of taking the mote out of my brother's eye while there was a beam in my own. So great is the unworthiness I perceive in myself that I can scarcely comprehend it, much less find words to describe it. A proof to me of the truth of all this is the joy I experience in thinking thus, for joy comes only from the truth and God does not allow it to arise from error.

Let us love each other in the Lord in whom we are one. Let us think only of Him and detach ourselves from this miserable world and above all from ourselves. Adieu.

A. R.

V.

TO LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

He shows the futility of his alleged excuses for delay.

Monte Calvario,

June 22nd, 1830.

My dear brother in our Lord Jesus Christ to whom alone be all honour and glory.

The love I bear you and the desire you show in your letter that "I should be generous towards you even when far away, by bestowing not trifling presents but great ones and as many as possible," prompts me to prove to you my readiness to fulfil your holy request. This I will do by offering all those remarks concerning your letter which appear to me necessary; and I trust that you will receive them in the same spirit of brotherly love in which they are proffered, and I beg you henceforth to adopt the same tone of confidence in dealing with me. I feel it my duty to put you on your guard against the stratagems of the evil spirit who will assuredly try every means to frustrate your holy resolutions. I am afraid I see in you a deficiency of generosity, and instead of generosity, pusillanimity, of all things the most contrary to the service of God. Observe, beloved friend, that I speak merely of what I *fear*; I do not wish to speak positively. I merely advise you to make a very diligent self-examination to detect any weakness and pusillanimity that the devil may succeed in instilling into your soul; in order that, if there be anything of the sort you may dispel it forthwith and substitute for it the generosity of our Divine Master, Jesus Christ, the conqueror of Satan. If the devil sees that we are brave, he loses courage and leaves us after a few assaults. But if he finds us weak and cowardly, he has just what he wants, he will give us no rest, and if we do not hasten to drive

away our fears, the victory is his. We must pray unceasingly with the Royal Psalmist: "Save me, O Lord, from pusillanimity of spirit and from tempest." Tempest is the inevitable consequence of pusillanimity, even as serenity of mind comes from generosity. It is only generosity that has faith in God and in His providence, while in timid souls abide distrust and deafness to the word of God. I wish you to understand, however, that I am not saying this because you speak in your letter of joining us in the spring of next year instead of this autumn. No, it is on account of certain expressions used in your letter.

You betray considerable fear of the gossip of the world. Be assured that if we are afraid of gossip we shall never effect anything for the glory of God. There is nothing of which I have less dread than the censure of the world. Certainly, when there are two ways of obtaining the same end, one of which will give occasion to much idle talk and the other to less, charity itself requires us to choose the second way. This I admit: but what I insist on is that we must not forego the least degree of good through fear of what men will say. Otherwise we shall come to give up everything that is good, for we can get nothing from the world but idle talk and presecution. "The disciple is not above his master." Woe to us if we pay attention to the world, if we listen to its false though subtle reasonings! So doing, we are lost; we no longer tread the path of Jesus Christ; if we think we do, we deceive ourselves, we are seduced by flesh and blood. You say that if people knew of your departure from Rome, they would say it was an act of still greater madness than you were guilty of at first; and no one would believe that a man who was prevented by ill health from obtaining admittance into a religious community on the Quirinal could be called by God to live at the foot of the Alps, without knowing what he is going to do there. But pray, is that really madness which the world deems such? If so then is the Cross of Christ folly: the whole Gospel is folly. It is folly to expose one's self to perils and dangers among barbarous

nations for the name of Jesus, as did the Apostles. It is folly to shed one's blood in witness of the faith, after the example of the martyrs. O desirable folly! What would I not give to be seized by such folly? O most precious folly! With tears do I beseech our Lord to give me some share in it. I am sure that you consider this folly true wisdom: but why not embrace it? Why should we take the judgment of the senseless world for our rule of conduct? *Senseless* I say, even though there were question of our relations, our friends, and even of priests, for even these may be for us the world. Do we wish to say at the tribunal of Christ: "I have not hearkened to Thy voice, I have not followed it because the world said it would be foolishness?" "Go then," He would answer, "go, receive thy reward from the world, thy teacher, the world which I have conquered, which is no more."

The world, you say, would contrast the Quirinal with the foot of the Alps. Perhaps it would. Jesus Christ on the contrary said: "True worshippers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth." As far as your health is concerned the world does not take into account the distinction between the time when you were ill and the present when you have regained your strength. As to coming here "without knowing what you are going to do here," the world certainly knows nothing of what is done in sacred solitude, but they know who have been sent forth from the insensate world by the impulse of the Spirit of God. I am quite sure that when Jesus Christ went into the desert, the world did not know why He went; but He did not wait for it to understand. How could it ever understand? We must understand, not the world. If we think we do not know what we are going to do, then we also are of the world. "Not knowing what you are going to do here." Is it possible that such gossip troubles you? I am ready to tell the world what I came here to do. I came to be faithful to my vocation, to obey the voice of God, to be far removed from this foolish world, to purify and save my soul. See what

there is to be done: it is no light task either for you or me. Woe unto the man who does not know what to do in the state to which God calls him! How far removed are these worldly reasonings from the spirit of our Institute! For the love of God, examine yourself on this point, lest you should become tainted even in the slightest degree with a worldly spirit. It is but too true that the breath of the world contaminates, it is pestilential, and we inhale it unconsciously.

You say further that the "world would prevent it at all costs." It certainly cannot prevent it if you are firm: all that it can do is to weaken and overcome your resolution. Nothing else can it do, especially as you live under a Government that does not oppose religious vocations. Ah! the Saints were never hindered by the world which they scorned. For the love of Christ they vowed hatred to father and mother, brothers and sisters, wife and children and all things; nay, they even trod them under foot, if need were. St. Jane Frances de Chantal acted thus. She was convinced of the necessity of obeying Jesus Christ, and hence she did not fear the world, recognizing its impotence and knowing that to God alone belongs the power of preventing or effecting whatsoever He wills. I beg you, therefore, to consider all this well, reflecting on and scrutinizing all the most secret workings of your soul, lest perhaps you should be going one way while you think you are going another. It is certain that the greatest obstacles in the path of perfection, and those which the saints have most feared, are human respect, love of kindred, and worldly interests. When we have escaped from these snares of the devil, we may make great progress with God's grace, but not before, for the least attachment to earthly things suffices to chain us to the earth. The words of Jesus Christ are clear:—No one can be my disciple who does not forsake his relatives and hate them with holy hatred and renounce all things. Those who think they can find a middle course are deluded by the devil. It is not the path pointed out by

Jesus Christ. He has no need of us: His invitation is given out of pure mercy. A man may lose his soul through one day's delay in corresponding to Divine grace.

I repeat, however, that I do not say this in order to oblige you to come here this autumn. I say it because I fear that the evil spirit may subject you to violent temptations, according to his wont, and I believe that the brotherly affection which I feel and ought to feel for you, requires me to give you the assistance you yourself desire. If you listen to the world, if you wish to enjoy the consolation of friends and kindred, you will strengthen more and more the bonds which attach you to earth, bonds as fatal as they are pleasant. Such motives and affections did not prevent my coming here, or even delay it for a single day. If they had I should feel perpetual remorse. It is not contrary to the Spirit of God that you should come here ostensibly for one reason rather than another; that may be required by prudence; but it would indeed be contrary to the Spirit of God to abandon your resolution for fear of the world, or through love of relatives, friends or country. I too have a mother who is most dear to me, and from her, I too received letters, advice, commands not to leave home. I should like you to see my answers. I have preserved copies of several letters I sent her, which would doubtless seem excessively severe in the eyes of those who do not know the love of Jesus Christ. I told her plainly to desist from commanding me, because she had no right to do so in these matters; and that I did not intend to do her will but the will of my Father, and my God. I bade her therefore not write to me again on the subject, as indeed she has not done.

"Go behind me Satan." We must speak thus to our relatives as Jesus Christ did to St. Peter. You have made me speak foolishly of myself, but I have done so in my own justification, as it seems that you have found an excuse for yourself through my telling you that I am keeping quiet here and letting no one become acquainted with my intentions. Certainly it is not necessary for men to know

what we are going to do, but it is necessary for us to do it.

This is what I feel obliged in conscience to say to you. Examine yourself diligently with regard to keeping the rule of Jesus Christ and the Saints. When the Child Jesus tarried among the doctors in the temple, He did not even tell his mother. What a lesson for us! He spoke plainly: all the Saints spoke plainly. Our God is a jealous God, and we find no instance in the Gospel of His tolerating more than one refusal. Let us act with rectitude. Examine yourself on the subject of sincerity, so that you may not be deceived yourself or deceive others. There is no sincerity where there is attachment to the things of earth. In fine, whatever you choose as the subject of your examen, make it thoroughly by the light of eternal truth, in the presence of God alone, and when the voices of the world and of passion are hushed. Such self-examination will assist to correct any defect there may be in you, or else to confirm and increase your generosity in the service of Jesus Christ, your sincerity and loyalty and all those kindred and fundamental virtues which so to speak form one and the same virtue. In this way you will build on a solid foundation which can be no other than the spoliation of the Cross.

I trust you will console me by following my advice in a matter which I believe to be of great moment for your own soul and, it may be, for the souls of others. You asked for great gifts. I hope you will deem this a very great gift indeed. Certainly the matter in question is very important; and the love which induces me to write is no less great. Ah, dear Gentili, we know not "whence the spirit of God cometh and whither it goeth." We do not require soldiers who must drink on bended knee, but those whom Gideon was commanded to choose, who stand to drink. I believe that Our Lady has given us this habitation on purpose to separate the one class of men from the other.

I embrace you affectionately in the Lord. All here send their greetings. I will mention other matters another time.

VI.

TO LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

*On controlling the imagination and cultivating the spirit of
the Institute.*

Calvario di Domodossola,

July 5th, 1830.

I reply without delay to your welcome letter of the 24th of June, which I have only just received. I sympathise with you in the temptations you speak of, and in which you ask to be aided by the prayers of our Community. We always pray in common for you and all our absent brethren. I trust in the goodness of God that the last letter which I wrote with all the affection of my heart and as my conscience prompted me, reached you at the right moment and that it encouraged you to pay no regard to worldly motives in your deliberations but to consider God alone, and the eternity to come. But I give thanks to our God, who does all things and gives strength to the feeble, for your letter contains expressions of manly courage. I perceive that you have a lively confidence in Him by whose aid alone we can gain real firmness and mastery over ourselves, prone as we are to inconstancy precisely because we are subject to sin. Only with God's help can we hold captive our imagination which is well-nigh incorrigible and has oftentimes need of being put under restraint like a lunatic. St. Francis of Sales used to say that "self-love is a great mischief-maker;" I would say the same of the imagination, which is often in league with self-love. Since you think you have well understood the spirit of the Institute, abide in tranquillity and simplicity; pray to God, humble yourself and seek nothing

further. I am rejoiced to hear that the Lord gives you to taste of the ineffable sweetness of a life hidden and obscure. It is the golden key of Heaven. My heart exults when I see that our dear Brothers likewise understand this wisdom. Humility and poverty of spirit in the grace of Jesus Christ, these are all the treasures that we covet. O God, grant to us abundantly this wealth!

Remember me to our Irish friend. I am favourably impressed by his asking counsel with regard to receiving the Subdiaconate, which shows that he is deeply convinced of its greatness; this is in accordance with the spirit of our Institute.

I have received a letter from a priest at Milan, who (writing with the sanction of his confessor) declares that he offers himself without reserve to God, and desires to be admitted into our company and to be governed by obedience in all things. I think that for the present I shall tell him to remain tranquil, perfecting himself in his present state, and that God will dispose of the future. We must do all with mature consideration and for God. Do you also pray that none of us may act indiscreetly or offer hindrances to Divine grace, which alone does all things.

To-morrow I expect Cardinal Morozzo who deigns to pay us a visit and will spend the whole day here. Hence there is a little bustle in the house, caused by preparations for his reception. While the others are busy, I alone remain inactive, staying in my little room with you. I must now leave you, however. I embrace you *in Domino* in whom we are but one. We will speak of the rest another time. Our dear Brothers send their greetings in return for yours and long for your coming as we do for things we love. Greet our friends one and all *et commenda Deiparæ tuum in Domino famulum,*

A. R.

VII.

TO DON GIOVANNI BOSELLI AT MILAN.

The preparation Don Boselli is to make before joining the Institute.

Calvario,

July 9th, 1830.

The preparation I consider most necessary for you, in the event of your being called by God to join us, is to accustom yourself: 1st, to the spirit of recollection and therefore to solitude and silence; 2ndly, to study. Until you have become accustomed to these two things, it will be impossible for you to live amongst us, as they are turning-points, so to speak, of our method of life. We never leave home without necessity, and each of us gives all the time he can after prayer to study; that is, all the time that remains after satisfying the demands that are made on him by charity. We must overcome ourselves in those things which are most repugnant to us. If you will do all this, if you will overcome yourself, with God's assistance, it may be that you will suit us. But it will require constancy, courage and humility. Try the experiment and then write to me again. Above all, I repeat, you must cultivate recollection, you must avoid worldly diversions, conversations and intimacies, and learn to be strict with yourself in the employment of time and to apply yourself to the study you have chosen. Pray for me. My dear companions wish to be remembered to you.

I am not writing to our dear friend Bonetti in order not to multiply letters. Tell him I was greatly pleased with his letter. Bid him pray and never tire of praying,

and seek in all things to serve God who will give him more and more light and consolation. Let us all be ready to accomplish His adorable will; there is nothing else desirable upon earth. Let our *daily bread* be the meditation of the Wounds of our Jesus crucified and the Dolours of our Mother Mary. O ineffable good! Let us all love one another in the Lord, to possess whom is to possess all.

A. R.

VIII.

TO LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

On his vocation.

Calvario,

August 2nd, 1830.

My dear brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your letter has consoled me. I thank our Lord for the sentiments He gives you of detachment from the world, from family and from worldly interests; and much more for the readiness you evince to come here next autumn. This is a practical proof of your sincerity. Guard these sentiments as a precious gift of God; beseech Him also that we may never lose this treasure through any fault of ours. Blessed is he who possesses it. "Blessed is he to whom flesh and blood hath not revealed it, but My Father who is in Heaven." Assuredly in the words of Isaias none can dwell in the high place but he who "stops his ears that he may not hear of blood." God who has put these thoughts into our hearts, will give us also strength to give them effect. Saying is one thing, doing another, and meanwhile the devil never slumbers. Neither will Christ sleep if we keep watch with Him; even our vigilance is His gift. Therefore let us humble ourselves, let us become little and pray without ceasing.

Nevertheless, as for coming here in the autumn, I do not mean to take advantage of your good dispositions by obliging you to come; on the contrary I consent most willingly to your remaining in Rome till the spring. I am content that you have shown your readiness to obey. Unless we are yielding, pliant, what can be done with us? Nothing, nothing! I acknowledge that I greatly

dread the snares of the devil, during all this time in which you will be exposed to *the toils of the huntsman*. I have read and have also unhappily experienced in myself how great are the subtlety and treachery of the enemy when he wishes to disturb things hateful to him. Do not imagine that I have lost confidence. No, dear friend, but I distrust man, I distrust this sinful flesh, this fickle heart, this ignorant mind, this presumptuous spirit, which, alas, I have inherited from my first father in common with all other men, my unhappy brethren. Therefore, to speak frankly, I shall be filled with dread as long as you are in the midst of so many relatives and friends and allurements. This apprehension will be increased when you begin to offer Holy Mass, if God grant you this favour this autumn; for the Evil One may make use of your very devotion to play some trick on you. But my confidence in Jesus Christ is greater than my fears. Thanks to His divine mercy I enjoy so profound a peace, that for some time past nothing has been able to disturb me. "Have confidence: I have overcome the world." This is our ensign.

But I will tell you why our dear Brothers so much wished you to come this autumn; for there was another reason besides the general desire to see you out of the world and at the foot of the cross with us. On Ash Wednesday in the year 1828, I came here to begin my novitiate as best I could. This was afterwards interrupted by my journey to Rome. Now it ought to be resumed. On next Ash Wednesday our fourth Lent will begin. We have therefore determined to begin on that sacred date a novitiate which will be a little more regular and conformable to the Constitutions. When Lent is over and we have passed as long a time in the novitiate as seems desirable, we shall proceed to make a promise of future vows, and we shall choose a superior to whom the government and care of our little household will be entrusted. All eagerly desired that you should take part in this; however, they will be resigned if God wills otherwise.

You will unite yourself with us as far as possible by making a special retreat at Rome, and we shall help one another even at a distance. Now I am going to tell you something about our life. We are but one heart and one soul. The day is so well regulated that it passes like lightning. Prayer, study and labours of charity (and here the demands made far exceed our strength) are the delightful occupations which engross every hour. We have reading at meals. First we read the Life of Jesus Christ, by P. Cesari, next the Life of St. Alphonsus Liguori, and now we have nearly finished the Life of St. Francis of Sales which is so full of beautiful instruction. I must tell you also that God in His mercy seems to wish to add another House to our small establishment. The Cardinal of Novara, who deigned to spend two whole days in our hermitage, was desirous that we should employ ourselves in giving retreats to the clergy. If God pleases we shall still have the novitiate with a Rector here on Monte Calvario, and we shall dedicate the house to St. Stanislas Kostka. At present we are all novices. Let us pray that God may be our Master. Then we shall have for our Mistress Our Lady, whom St. Alphonsus called *the mother of perseverance*. It was she, as you know, who gave us this house.

Write to me about your advancement to the priesthood. I should like you to place yourself in a *state of indifference* as far as the will is concerned, even with respect to your Ordination, if you have not done so. Forgive me for saying this, and for the love of God do not take it amiss. It is my great desire for your perfection which prompts me to say it. It is not you I distrust but human nature. Do you treat me with equal freedom ; I shall ever be obliged to you. If then you are thinking of receiving the priesthood in the autumn, draw near to it with such equanimity as to be ready to defer it, should you be advised to do so. I always bear in mind the saying of St. Francis of Sales: that he was an enemy to hurry. Let us do everything without hurry, without anxiety, and let us not be too much bent on the object we have in view. I am well content to

believe that there is no defect in you on this point. If you do not need these maxims, they are none the less full of beauty, and we should delight in calling them to mind. This doctrine of St. Francis of Sales will prevent us from being deceived by our imagination, for tranquillity chastens and restrains it. Let us never put our trust in this deceitful power, the servant of self love. Let us not seek an exalted sphere of action, but keep to the lowly state wherein God has placed us. Let us be poor in spirit: thus shall we be the poor of Christ. Adieu. Live Jesus and Mary!

A. R.

IX.

TO THE SAME AT ROME.

On abandonment to Providence in sickness.

Rovereto,

September 13th, 1830.

My dearest friend and brother in Jesus Christ,

Your letter of the 26th of August caused me much affliction according to the flesh, as it brought me news of your illness, but at the same time no little consolation according to the spirit in which is our true life. With all my heart I rejoice that you recognize your bodily ailments as signs of the tender love of God. Indeed they are pledges of a love unequalled, precious and sublime. Though I, alas, am deficient in patience, yet as often as I remember my habitual infirmities, I acknowledge that they are God's gift and I am conscious that I cannot sufficiently thank Him. There is no better time for the practice of humility and patience than the time of sickness. How greatly we are assisted in recognizing the awful judgments of God, when we experience signs of decay and realize that death is hanging over us. All vain presumption is cast down, and the falseness of pride yields to the knowledge of our own nothingness. Every remnant of self-confidence dies within us and in its stead arises in our heart a spirit of self-abandonment and most loving confidence in God alone. Yes, my friend, so it is.

Yet I also thank God for the news that the fever has now left you, since it is He who gives death and life; and I trust you will grow stronger every day. I am anxious to be accurately informed of your progress. If you cannot write ask Mr. Quinn to do so: give him my kind regards.

I trust that there will be no unpleasantness with anyone on account of the arrangements made for your departure. Indeed, it seems to me that no one can find fault with you, if you simply say that you are leaving in the autumn for a change of air. This is what we had agreed upon, leaving all the rest to the disposal of Providence. How sweet it is to surrender ourselves into God's hands, without curiosity about the future ! To live in uncertainty about the future and with perfect tranquillity in the hands of God, was the desire of the Saints, and it is a disposition most pleasing to God. These are your sentiments as I gather from your letter, and I am not surprised that you should find great peace and constancy in this complete and humble conformity to the will of God. I am glad also to hear that you maintain yourself in indifference with regard to the priesthood, ready to follow the counsel of your confessor and other superiors. What you say of the sense of unworthiness which you feel when vested as a deacon is a ray of light imparted to you by God, a glimpse of the truth. Indeed the very corruption of our nature, owing to original sin, our ignorance, innate presumption and inherited concupiscence have degraded us and rendered us vile and despicable to an extent we cannot express or even fully conceive. It is the pure mercy of God which has infused grace into our souls in Baptism and given life to our spirit, although the flesh is still dead and even bears the fruits of death. Therefore the more we abase ourselves, the nearer we approach to truth.

I embrace you with all my heart in the love of our Lord and Mary, our tender Mother. Take care of your health and let me know how you are. Remember me to all our friends. Pray without ceasing to our Mother. Adieu.

A. R.

X.

TO THE SAME AT ROME.

He speaks of his good works and studies, and advises him to have confidence in Divine Providence.

Calvario,

December 14th, 1830.

I thank the Lord, my dearest brother in Jesus Christ, that you are occupied in the good work of instructing the ignorant, and leading the poor children to Him who said: "suffer little ones to come to me." How sweet it is to wear oneself out for love of Him! I am also pleased that you are studying the *Treatise on the Origin of Ideas*. I am convinced that it will be very useful for us to understand this doctrine thoroughly. The whole world, in my opinion, all the sciences and especially Theology, are in great need of it. I have had the consolation of receiving letters from learned men who tell me that my book contains principles which *will one day become the common doctrine of the schools*. God grant it may be so! I do not think that men will ever learn to reason rightly until a sound system of philosophy has become generally accepted. Try to master the subject, and if you have any difficulties, let me know.

I am waiting to hear of the occurrence you speak of as favourable to the Institute about which you add: "I think it is the work of God, but if it be so I am to be pitied." Is it some dignity that has been offered to you? But in that case you would not speak of coming to us in the spring, nor do I see how that could be useful to the Institute. It must be something else. I should recommend you to be prudent in taking any step, and if the Institute

is concerned I should like you to write to me so that we may consult together and act with maturity and prudence even in the least matters.

As to yourself, you need only say that you are coming here and will remain for some time, living from day to day in the hands of God who sustains the world day by day, and lets no one fall who trusts in His care. Divine Providence is manifestly at work here, and is especially visible in the progress made in virtue by my dear companions; although my sins might well be an impediment. We are all more fully persuaded each day of the singular grace and mercy shown in drawing us together at the foot of the cross. We never see things so well as in that sacred place. Help us with your prayers.

A. R.

XI.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

A mission to England. A proposed visit to Trent.

Calvario di Domodossola,

January 18th, 1831.

My dear brother and kind friend in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom alone be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I do not delay a moment in replying to your letter in which I discern manifest proofs of the mercy of God and our Redeemer Jesus Christ. We should be ever grateful to Him, desiring always to have more to suffer for His sake, and if it were possible to obtain that grace which is the highest of all, the grace of sacrificing our lives and shedding our blood for His glory, the one and only object of our desires, of our very being, since for Him we have been created.

The Catholics of England are so dear to me, that I would gladly do anything to render them the least service ; and I would let pass no opportunity of assisting them which Providence might present to me. I would willingly give my blood for them to the glory of our Lord, though my blood is of little worth. I have thought over all you have written, in order to see how I might best comply with the desire of Mr. Phillips, in so far as it is compatible with the rules of prudence that are laid down in our Constitutions and with the spirit of our Institute:

I propose then, that if you are ready to embrace this mission, you should make a year's novitiate with us, in order to prepare yourself for this work and acquaint yourself thoroughly with the spirit of our rules and maxims, as you will do by seeing their working and

putting them in practice. At the end of a year I am willing to give you two companions and send you to England, either to Leicester or to any other place that Mr. Phillips may select, in order to found a House, governed by a Rector, with the cure of souls. In saying that you will make a year's novitiate here, I do not mean to dispense you entirely from the rest of your novitiate; you will continue to be a novice even when engaged in active work. We are obliged to do the same thing here, as has been the case with all Institutes, when they were in their commencement.

Take counsel, therefore, with our Lord concerning all this, by means of long and fervent prayer in great tranquillity and peace of mind; and when you consider yourself to be ready and resolute tell Mr. Phillips everything. For my part, I have no doubt that it is the right thing to do. I beg you to let me know as soon as you have made up your mind, because I have the work greatly at heart. In the meantime we shall pray, as usual, that God may be pleased to give us the light we need and that uprightness of soul which seeks to do His will alone. Have no fear with regard to ways and means. Be assured that if the work be His, God will provide for everything and regulate everything. I place this, with all our other plans, in the hands of our dear Mother, that she may do with them as she pleases: and so all will be well.

Now it is my turn to tell you of something that has occurred, in which I think we may trace the hand of God. Last autumn, as I told you in my letter, I was obliged to go to the Tyrol on business. There came to see me a Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the Seminary of Trent, who knew nothing about our community at Calvario. This priest, after speaking about the many spiritual needs of the district, began to tell me of a plan, which he and some other good priests had formed, of uniting together in a kind of religious society for the purpose of ministering to the spiritual needs of the people. He is a man of great zeal, and he urged me with much earnestness to

take part in the proposed scheme. Then I thought it well to tell him candidly of our own plans, our small establishment and general principles. He was greatly pleased and related everything to the Rector of the Seminary at Trent, one of those who had formed this union, a man of rare merit and reputed to be a saint. He wished to hear everything from my own lips, and then assured me that his indecision had given way to a fixed resolve since he found in my own design everything that was needed to meet the wants of our times and, in particular, the needs of his own soul. In short, I drew up there and then the plan of a society, constituting this good Rector of the Seminary its Superior, and establishing the practice of obedience and such bonds as could exist among persons who were as yet unable to live in community. At the same time, I commissioned the Superior to find a suitable house in Trent which we could purchase or rent. What do you think happened? See the working of Divine Providence. I received a short time ago a most cordial letter from the Bishop of Trent, in which after expressing his good wishes for Christmastide, he invited me to come into his diocese for the purpose of forming an association of Priests if I thought fit, and he even offered me the use of his Seminary (recently enlarged) should I consider it adapted to my purpose. I could scarcely believe my own eyes, on reading this in the Bishop's familiar handwriting. The most remarkable thing is that he could not have known anything about what had passed between these priests and myself, as we were keeping everything secret. Moreover the terms of his invitation were so courteous, leaving me perfectly free to follow my own judgment, that it seems to me almost a miracle. I accordingly replied at once that I would go to Trent in the spring in order to set hand to the work, and would remain until it was placed on a good footing.

May God be praised! Let us offer heartfelt thanks to His goodness; but above all, let us abase ourselves, remembering that death may overtake us at any moment.

We must not be solicitous for the morrow, nor give play to our imagination concerning the future. Rather let us crucify our imagination with our flesh, using those things which Divine Providence has actually placed in our hands, with diligence but with sincere distrust of ourselves, with confidence in God and in our dear Mother's protection. Let us strive to co-operate in His designs with constancy of purpose, simplicity of heart and indomitable perseverance. Thus shall we accomplish all that God has given us to do for His glory, which is the only object we have in view : thus shall we secure our eternal salvation. It gives me the greatest consolation to perceive that you are penetrated with the conviction of your own nothingness. Let us never abandon the labour of abasing ourselves and of rectifying our intention, since we are worth nothing, less than nothing.

I am much pleased that you are entering into the doctrines contained in my *Essay on the Origin of Ideas*, since these are the doctrines of Christian tradition. My dear friend, what we want is a Christian philosophy by which we may be able to do good on many occasions ; this "way of the intellect" is one of the memorials I retain of Pius VIII. of holy memory.

We all embrace you with great affection in our Lord ; we pray for you continually that *quod bonum est in vobis agere faciat*. Adieu.

A. R.

XII.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

Of the spirit of the Institute with regard to undertaking external works.

Calvario,

January 31st, 1831.

My dear brother and friend in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom alone be honour and glory!

In the first place, permit me by that charity of Jesus Christ which binds us together, and which, I confidently hope in the Lord, will never cease to unite us for all eternity, permit me, I say, to tell you that I could not approve your action in connection with the Bishop. No, dear friend, let us never allow ourselves to be carried away by impatience of long delay, for this is directly opposed to the spirit we have chosen, and it would subvert the very foundations of that Institute which God seems likely to establish in His pure mercy. I have this matter much at heart, and I am grieved at the step you have taken of your own accord, for this is a mode of action which is extremely dangerous and contrary to our common rules. I therefore most earnestly entreat you to resolve never to act again in like manner, but to rest on Providence with great confidence, seeking to do well your present good works and leaving the future without anxiety in the hands of God. If it should seem advisable to take any fresh step let me know first, that we may consider it well together to see whether it be really in keeping with the spirit of prudence, which is the spirit of God and of our Institute.

We must be deeply impressed with the conviction that

one thing only is necessary: to save our souls and to abide in God. What more can we desire? If at any time God should require anything of us, has He not the means of speaking to us, He who has given us the use of our tongue? Does it cost Him anything to make known His will? Or is it likely that He will keep hidden from us what we ought to know or do? Ah no! for He is good, we alone are bad. But He is also wise, and He alone knows the times and the moments, which "He has put in His own power." Let us remain at peace while we are engaged in the good works we have in hand; at peace in the possession of our Lord. Be ours the lively faith and the long-suffering for which the Patriarchs are so highly extolled in Holy Scripture, and that "waiting for the Lord" so frequently mentioned in the Psalms. Yes, let us wait for the Lord: He will come. Let us not anticipate His coming: that would be presumption and folly. What do we know? Do we know what is good and what is evil for the Church? Certainly not: we are blind and ignorant. What can we do? Nothing, because we are nothing. It behoves us simply to remain tranquil in our lowly condition, tranquil in the consciousness of our nothingness, lest we only increase the displeasure of God. Rather let us appease Him by humble prayer. It is God alone who can make *nothingness* an instrument for good, if it so please Him, for He calls "the things that are not as those that are."

I beseech you therefore for the love of Jesus Christ to meditate on this maxim, for it forms the very basis of our union which until now has been the work of God alone. I beg you to exhort others to do the same, in order that we may restrain our idle imagination, which is always busying itself about the future; and that we may proceed with mature deliberation. Thus shall we walk in the light of the Divine Word. Certainly it is hard to restrain the imagination, which would fain conjure up the future with its fallacious desires and its dreams of great achievements. But it is an enemy against which we must wage

war to the death, for when it is conquered we shall have triumphed also over pride and the hardness of our hearts and shall be *docibiles Dei*.

All our Constitutions, if you have understood them, turn on this one point. Let us then live in the present and be content with our humble abode. We must not think of founding other houses in the Diocese or elsewhere, until such time as God shall be pleased to make known His will. As regards that other establishment, since the thing has been done, I consider it also to be a means intended by Divine Providence, which renders even our mistakes subservient to its designs. It is of the utmost importance for us to understand that though we do not intend to limit ourselves to any special work, yet we do not undertake anything of our own accord; we merely co-operate with God when He assigns us work, and in the meantime we live contented in our retirement. The Constitutions are merely rules of prudence for particular cases; it is not necessary to consider now that development which is contemplated in the Constitutions. We must not think about it: God will accomplish everything when and where it shall please Him. We should attend to the works we have in hand; and therefore at present we must provide for the two houses already established and the one about to be founded: this is all that concerns us.

Certainly we must not allow ourselves to be fettered or confined in the exercise of our activity. This is an essential point, which I reserve for discussion when I see you. We must not think about obtaining recognition from the State. We are simply a union of priests leading a private life and working together with the approval of the Bishops and other ecclesiastical Superiors. A limit of any kind is repugnant to our Society, and where we cannot work without restrictions, there it is not God's will that we should be employed. Let us have no doubts. Jesus Christ has set no limits to His Church, and it is an impious falsehood of Protestantism to say that the Church is a

part of the State. Let us keep with Jesus Christ and His Church which bears the name of *Catholic*; let us fear nothing. We must not submit to those arbitrary limitations which, unfortunately, some seek to impose on a Church essentially *Catholic*. The Bishop in his letters to me on this subject says distinctly that he does not desire to limit my projects to his diocese, but is well pleased that the good done by us should be diffused throughout the whole Church.

Let us all pray with one heart and one soul, as indeed we all do daily in common and in private. I always offer Mass for my own soul and for the souls of those whom the Lord, as it seems, wills to associate with me. It is prayer that must bring everything to maturity, but prayer made for the welfare of our own soul, not for objects beyond our sphere. If we attend to our own salvation we shall not oppose the designs of God. More than this we cannot do, for we are good for nothing. God diffuses His goodness wherever He meets with no resistance. Therefore let our one thought be to remove all that hinders the grace of God and to keep ourselves in peace. Assuredly, the wisdom we need is that described by St. James, as you say in your letter: "the fruit of justice is sown in peace." Tell our dear companion, in my name if you like, that he should restrain his zeal and advance very, very slowly and cautiously, always asking for counsel and acting *under obedience* even in the least matters. Let us not be solicitous, but leave the result of our work to Providence, for it alone can do all. Let us make no violent and painful efforts, as though the increase of God's kingdom depended on our exertions and toilsome labours. Souls are in the hands of God, and it is He who brings about their conversion. Consider the gentleness of our Lord Jesus Christ in all His actions. There was no violence or excessive vehemence in His words. He scattered the seed and suffered it to germinate of itself, with the assistance of His secret operations. So let us do at the proper time and place, and let us have great confidence in the action of God on souls.

Such are the principles adopted by our Society which must take shape of itself, that is to say by the will, not of man but of God, who has dominion over all things and reaches from one extremity of creation to the other with power and yet with gentleness. He "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly."

On the same principle let us be slow to admit associates; we should be content to remain few in number. If God sends us companions we shall receive them with joy but let us not anticipate even by our desires the designs of God. Of those who are at present dwelling in this house there is not one who has not evidently been sent here by Divine Providence. I will tell you when we meet again about the progress made daily under the gentle guidance of Providence. We are always content. Our Society in whatever condition it may be is always complete and perfect in itself and seeks nothing further. All our desires should tend to our daily advancement in virtue; whether we be many or few matters little. The end of the Society is simple, it is merely the end of the individuals who compose it; this is attainable under all circumstances, consequently the society is always content and complete.

The training of the members of the Society is the great work to which we must direct all our thoughts in the commencement. We want not quantity but quality. At present we must give all our attention to the Novitiate. May the cross of Jesus Christ put the seal on all our vocations!

A. R.

XIII.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

He advises Gentili to come to Calvario as soon as possible.

Calvario,

March 16th, 1831.

My dear brother and friend in Jesus Christ,

I need hardly tell you that we have, in common with all the faithful, offered heartfelt thanks to God for the election of the Holy Father. I will say no more on this subject, because I have very little time to spend with you, having been obliged to add the Lenten course of sermons to my other occupations. My object in writing is to tell you that the time has come when you can no longer defer your coming to Calvario, where we all eagerly expect you. Time is precious as you well know, and God has counted the moments. Therefore delay no longer, but forsake courageously all that is dearest to you in Rome for the humble retreat and the society of the humble brethren whom the Lord has given you. "Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred." It is only by yielding prompt obedience now that you will receive the grace of doing what God may have destined for you in the future. I feel confident that you will now prove by deeds the sincerity of your dispositions.

Have no fear of political turmoils but put all your trust in Providence. The people here are perfectly tranquil and loyal. Even should any general rising take place, we have a home in the Tyrol where we shall be perfectly secure. Let us not be over anxious, however, but trust in our good God, whom we desire to serve, and in our common Mother.

In quitting Rome you need not imagine that you are leaving it for ever ; but rather consider that you are going on a pleasant journey with the view of benefiting your soul by a short retirement from the world. If in leaving Rome you are prepared never to see it again the sacrifice will be more complete, and if God gives you grace make the offering by all means. But there is no need of your conjuring up temptations, for as a matter of fact I believe Divine Providence will conduct you to Rome again at no distant period. Nevertheless, I repeat that the most acceptable sacrifice is the entire oblation of everything in this world. How good the Lord is to those who desire nothing besides Him on earth ! I am anxious to have you here before my departure for Trent, whither I am called to found a new house. Set out therefore as soon as you can. Say as little as possible to anyone about your departure and let there be no formal leave-taking, but come here quietly. As a matter of fact we have no reason to expect a permanent separation ; the more quietly and prudently you act the better. If you wish to mention the matter to Tarasconi and the other friends (to whom I wish to be remembered) do so only when all is arranged, on the eve of departure. Cardinal Morozzo on his return to Novara wrote only a few words to me about you, but those few words were consoling ; he said that you were ready to come as soon as you were summoned. Our dear Don Giambattista and all the others embrace you with tender affection. Adieu. I hope we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you.

A. R.



XIV.

TO THE SAME AT ROME.

On prudence and simplicity.

Rovereto,

June 5th, 1831.

My beloved friend and brother in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be all honour and glory.

Since you tell me that the Holy Father has commanded you to be silent, I no longer desire that you should communicate to me the matter under discussion. On the contrary, I wish you to say nothing about it. Moreover, do not imagine from what I have said in a former letter or may say in this, that I am impatient and in a hurry. By the grace of God I have long been free from anxiety or hurry in all that appertains to our Society, and gladly adapt myself on each and every occasion to the good pleasure of God who alone knows the times, the moments and the means. Nevertheless, I know well that if there is anything which the devil hates and seeks to frustrate it is a religious vocation, and I know, too, that we shall not be able to succeed without the assistance of our Blessed Lady and without incessant struggle. Hence it is only natural that I should be afraid of the devil's putting hindrances in your way and devising delays, which under the appearance of good, would make you defer your consecration of yourself to God amongst us. It is this fear and love which induces me to write to you. At the same time I trust that our Blessed Lady will assist you, if you act with an upright and pure intention, without human motives.

I must also confess that there appeared to be some signs of wavering on your part when you asked for counsel from the Holy Father. It is unusual to have recourse to the Pope himself except in matters which are really doubtful and cannot be determined by ordinary means; and this out of respect to the Holy Father and in order not to expose ourselves to temptation. If I really thought this were a device of the devil, I would beg the Holy Father to release you from the obligation of secrecy; for the saints say that the devil makes capital out of such secrets and that he is vanquished when they are disclosed. But I will wait now until you write and give me some information. I beg you to do this as soon as possible, the more so as the affair in question may be a certain good work of which I have heard something already. In the meantime let us pray and remain on our guard. For the rest act uprightly and do not let anything I say disturb you in the least degree. Here, by God's grace, everything is going on well.

At Milan I met Mr. Phillips who told me about the absurd notions some people have formed of our Society. This must be an additional motive for not lending our Constitutions thoughtlessly and without necessity. I advise you again, as I did previous to my departure, not to give them to any one without necessity; nay, do not even speak of them without a sufficient motive. Whatever we say unnecessarily, will be subject matter for the devil's deceits. We must *act* and not talk so much. Men must see our principles in practice. Words simply foster our self-love: they give occasion to suspicions and idle talk and may even arouse the passions of men. For God's sake, dear Gentili, act with great prudence and caution. Let us proceed in simplicity and remain in our humble condition; we must not take too many into our confidence, nor readily have recourse to the patronage of the great, for it behoves us to be lowly.

I was greatly pleased with Mr. Phillips. In the course of the few hours we spent together, we formed a friendship

which I trust will be lasting. He opened his whole heart to me and told me of all his plans. May it please God to crown them with success ! I introduced him to an intimate friend of mine at Milan, and they were both delighted to make each other's acquaintance. I am writing to you from a place of retirement where I am spending a few days in recollection and quiet prayer, before going whither I am called—you know for what purpose. Pray earnestly and write to me as soon as you can. We must render an account to God for every day that passes.

A. R.

XV.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT ROME.

He disapproves of his stay at Rome, and of the motives alleged for it.

Trent,

July 1st, 1831.

My dear friend and brother in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom alone be all honour and glory.

Your last letter has caused me great affliction, for I perceive that you let yourself be swayed by your imagination. Into how many fallacies and delusions have you not fallen! You say that when you were about to set out in consequence of my summons, you were kept back by the desire to undertake a good work! This work, however pious, could not be carried on by you because you were yourself called to be trained in the Institute of Charity. If your vocation be genuine, this is, at present, the good work which it is your duty to undertake. Anything else is a mere distraction, making you diverge from your course. A traveller who stops at every little pathway to see where it leads, is constantly leaving the road and will never reach his destination. If you are called to the Institute of Charity, it is levity, not to say presumption, to allow yourself to be drawn into inopportune undertakings.

Did not the Cardinal Vicar himself give you leave to depart? Why then remain? You say you felt *inspired* to do so! I should like fewer inspirations and more steadiness, more obedience above all. I do not at all like this following of your own whims and fancies, it displeases me greatly and fills me with alarm to see you thus neglect what is suggested by your Superior and required by

your vocation. You ask me to pray God to grant you a little humility, of which you feel the need. I reply that I will do so with all my heart, for it seems to me that you greatly require it. You speak as if you were always under inspiration ; you must think a great deal of yourself ! You talk of heroic things, saying you had determined to make your pilgrimage here on foot *without staff or scrip*. My dear brother, words do not satisfy me : I look at facts. The facts are that you have not come, that you have been building castles in the air, and that you have compromised yourself in many ways. You heap so many things together in your letter, you bring in so many personages, that I do not know where to begin in pointing out your indiscretions. I will only say that all this boastful talking about our affairs to so many persons is not at all according to the spirit of our Institute, which leads us rather to be unobtrusive, humble and contented.

I have even received information from Florence of what has happened at Rome, and from this I gather that you must have filled Rome with your idle chatter. You speak of persecutions. What else can you expect if you are so talkative and imprudent ? Do people persecute or oppose a thing that is hardly known to exist ? You must not imagine that every persecution is for justice' sake ; there are persecutions which a man brings on himself by his own folly. It was highly indiscreet of you to ask an audience of the Sovereign Pontiff for the solution of doubts which proceeded from an over-heated imagination and a lack of docility. When you are called to the Institute of Charity and the Superior tells you that the time has come, is not your duty plain ? To turn aside from the main road is to miss the goal. The triumphant tone in which you speak of your audience, when you ought to be apologizing for your fault, gives me so much displeasure that I tell you frankly, I shall be obliged to disown you if you do not acknowledge your error.

What temerity and presumption could have induced you to negotiate so many things without first asking my

opinion? When you were in doubt about coming, why did you not write at once to me and wait for my advice, instead of going to the Pope? Had you done so, you would have avoided many false steps. Perhaps you feared that my suggestions would not agree with your own wishes, and you desired to get the Pontiff's words as a shield to protect you while you were doing your own will. Away with such devices! Let us act with simplicity: we want no subtle diplomatists. The great benevolence of the Holy Father towards me has induced him to be affable to you, but I shall let him know, if necessary, that I had nothing to do with your proceedings, that I am grieved you should have abused his kindness, and that if you do not amend, I shall no longer recognize you as one of us. Our Institute does not adopt such manœuvres as yours; it could not even exist if it used such means. You say besides this that you several times sought an audience of the Holy Father in order to congratulate him on his election in the name of our Society. Who gave you the commission? Who made you our ambassador? Your own imagination made you fancy yourself the representative of a society you did not even consult. What blunders! I am ashamed when I think what credit you procure for myself and the poor Institute, exhibiting yourself in Rome as an ambassador with full powers. God's will be done, however; may it serve as penance for my sins.

Let me tell you plainly that I shall accept no more excuses, and that I expect you to acknowledge your fault. Moreover, if you have not been deceiving me all this time, if you have a true vocation to the Institute of Charity, I insist *on your setting out at once for Domodossola*, not on foot (because you are not strong enough and it would be tempting God) but by the coach. I feel sure that the Cardinal Vicar will give you leave to go, when he hears it is my wish, for he has always shown me great kindness. I tell you plainly that if you disobey me again this time under pretext of some new inspiration or some new mystery, I shall consider that you are not chosen by God to be one of us. Here we

have a very different mode of acting, and God in His infinite mercy guides us safely in all things. We are far from being able to accept the proposed foundation in Rome, which is a castle in the air. We must consolidate the two establishments already undertaken and we cannot think of new enterprises until the Institute has taken root and we have completed our own training. I await your reply from which I shall know what the Institute is to expect from you. May God and Our Lady bless you !

A. R.

XVI.

TO THE SAME AT ROME.

He accepts Gentili's avowal of his fault and encourages him to persevere in his vocation.

Trent,

July 20th, 1831.

My dear brother in the love of Jesus Christ, to whom alone be all honour and glory!

I thank God with all my heart. Your letter has reassured me. The excuse you offer for having wished to go to the Pope is not a good one. Even if everyone else hastens to congratulate him, that is not a reason why we should do so: our interests are not those of the world. The world has its reasons for paying court to sovereigns and great men, but these reasons have no weight with us. The Pope himself would not have taken it amiss if we had held aloof from approaching him, precisely because he has so much good will for us and is besides a man of high principles. Nay, more, I believe he would have been pleased with your modest and humble behaviour, and would have been convinced of the disinterestedness of our motives. Moreover, the man who counts himself for nothing, does not even imagine that other people take notice of him, he remains in the background and is glad to be forgotten. I did not even venture to write to His Holiness on this occasion, preferring to appear unmannerly rather than presumptuous. I waited until the Holy Father himself deigned to send me a message; then indeed the great kindness of the Pope in showing that he had not forgotten me constrained me to write to him, and I received a most gracious answer.

But though your excuse is not good, nevertheless I allow it to pass, inasmuch as you tell me you do not offer it in order to defend yourself, but simply to dissuade me from mentioning the matter to the Pope. This indeed is a step which I would not take without necessity. For the rest I am greatly pleased with your assurance that you wish to avow your faults with sincere humility and without alleging excuses. This is the right course. God will pour forth His blessings upon you if you act thus, as I desire you to do. There is no better way of overcoming our faults than to place ourselves when corrected on the side of him who gives the reproof; and then, concentrating our attention on the faults in question we should endeavour to see them in all their deformity. God will then give us the grace (and what a grace it is!) to see our faults and to correct them. With these dispositions you need have no fear of being unable to endure our retired life. Have confidence in God and in our Blessed Mother, and you will most certainly succeed and find greater delight in this holy retirement than you can imagine. Then, too, you will learn to be prudent and will no longer act thoughtlessly, for your imagination will be curbed by obedience. No, do not fancy that you will find austerity and severity amongst us. You will only find steady and persevering efforts to do good to souls: grand and impracticable projects are a delusion of the devil.

We must be thorough in what we do: *age quod agis*; and when we have an object in view nothing should distract us from it. Now what we have to attend to at present is to begin the work of training ourselves in the spirit of the Institute. When through God's mercy we shall have been trained and incorporated in the Institute, then we shall be able to labour under the guidance of obedience. The work given us by obedience is given to us by God. Who knows whether God may not then lead us to found that establishment in England of which we have spoken to Mr. Phillips? Who knows whether some of us may not be called to Rome? Let us leave all these questions to God,

and not be inquisitive about His secrets, content to know that in all His designs He is loving and merciful. We must check all thoughts about the future, since we are not certain even of living for one day more. Let us concentrate ourselves upon the present and serve God in it. Herein must be our peace and all our happiness.

This is solid virtue: to do what is enjoined by obedience, to do it with all our heart, with complete self-abandonment into the hands of God and the loving care of our dear Mother. O happy security which we find in thus living entirely in the present, in this delightful abandonment to the care of God! Do not let the devil put it into your head that we want men who are already perfect. No, we are here only to amend our lives: this is the great work in which God would have us wholly occupied. Take courage therefore and come quickly. I should never conclude were I to give you all the loving messages of your brethren.

May Jesus and Mary bless you!

A. R.

XVII.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the direction of the Novices.

Trent,

November 14th, 1831.

My dearest brother in Jesus Christ our Lord and our only good, to whom alone be all honour and glory.

Much as I should wish to do so, I cannot answer all your questions to-day. You shall have an answer in course of time, and for the present you must be content with what I can give you. Remember that it is of the utmost importance for us to be patient and to know how to wait. I am an enemy of haste, and I love to see our brethren practise the virtue of *longanimity*, so much extolled in the Sacred Scripture. The few remarks I shall make to day are the following.

I like the Novices to have meditations adapted to their needs, and I am sure we shall find the benefit of this. What I would recommend you *in visceribus Christi* is not to make any display of authority, but to treat them with unbounded charity and gentleness, bearing with their defects and not trying to make them run beyond their strength, but leading them from one step to another on the ladder of virtue. If we know ourselves we shall have an infinite kindness and indulgence for others. If progress is made let us give thanks to God, for it is His gift and not the work of man. As for defects it is often better to pass them over, when the correction or the penance would be beyond the strength of the Novice; a more favourable opportunity will present itself later and that can be seized for giving the correction. Above all, remember that a reproof is seldom beneficial

when it follows immediately upon an offence. In most cases it is advisable to allow the culprit time to grow calm, and then when he is perfectly tranquil and good humoured and perhaps least expects it, you can make him hear the voice of reason and sincere charity, and you must be prepared to forgive *not seven times but seventy times seven*. On your part, you must not be disquieted, nor even retain the remembrance of the Novice's fault, much less feel resentment. Subdue your own spirit and do not show the least sign of being offended. If you allow yourself to be in the least estranged, you will lose their confidence and love, and without this all your labour will be wasted. Consider carefully the description of the Master of Novices as given in the Constitutions, and note that the first quality required of him is a peaceful disposition; "*Hic autem vir sit natura pacificus.*"

I must conclude as visitors are arriving. I embrace and bless you with great affection in the Lord. Follow the instructions that are given you, and promote union in the house by means of gentleness, charity, humility and submission to your local Superior. Spend as much time with him as he will allow, as it will be advantageous for you to confer together as much as possible. Adieu. I expect a faithful account of everything in due course.

Your most affectionate brother in Jesus and Mary,
A. R.

XVIII.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On humility and discretion.

Trent,

November 29th, 1831.

My dearest friend and companion in the service of our Lord, the only object of our love.

Your welcome letter has given me the greatest consolation in our Lord. The way of humility is one which will never lead us astray. It is the way of truth and of justice; let us keep to it. If we are humble, there will be no guile in us; we shall be "Israelites indeed." Happy we, if we attain to this! But who will lead us to it? Only the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

Practise humility by submission to your Superior at Calvario, being dependent in all things on him, and being always in perfect accord with him. You will gain much merit by this; and in proportion as your own soul is gaining profit will your labours for our dear Novices and companions be blessed by God; for we ought to expect everything from the benediction of God, not from our own operations.

You must lay penances on the Novices in proportion to their spiritual strength; with the more perfect you can be more rigorous. Even a small defect is deserving of a great penance; but all must be regulated according to what seems likely to be profitable; for this is the whole aim of the great art of training souls. Be solicitous to make all advance, but let the food and medicine be suited to the individual. If you pray, the Holy Ghost will inspire you how to act in particular cases.

I am glad your Philosophy Class goes on well. More good may come of it than appears, and I expect great things for the glory of God. Addio! Pray for your miserable brother,

A. R.

XIX.

TO EMILIO BELISY.

On constancy in the practice of virtue.

Trent,

Feast of St. John the Evangelist, 1831.

Your kind letter was most welcome, for I always take it as a favour when you send me some account of yourself. I thank God for keeping you faithful, and I pray for you daily as for all my companions. The way of virtue is arduous certainly, but grace makes it smooth and easy. Let us trust only in this grace and when we come to the journey's end we shall find all happiness, all glory. You cannot fail to find happiness if you persevere in the Lord's service. How good and generous He is to those who serve Him with simplicity and constancy! Make yourself every day more wholly His: contempt of yourself and the world, the desire of Heaven, the love of poverty, the practice of obedience and mortification, that is what I desire for you. I embrace you and bless you from my heart. Adieu.

A. R.

XX.

TO THE DEACON CLEMENTE ALVAZZI AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

On the spiritual combat, and on his approaching ordination.

Trent,

April 4th, 1832.

My dear companion in the service of our Lord,

I was pleased to receive your letter in token of your desire to correct your faults, for this desire cannot fail to be crowned, when it is confident and persevering. Yes, my dear Alvazzi, be of good heart! The Lord will carry you to the summit of His holy mountain. Only let us continually despise ourselves, whilst we nourish a high esteem for others, a tender gratitude towards those who have the care of us, an exact, complete and cordial obedience. Be docile to the Vice-Superior and to Don Gentili, your Master; receive their words as coming from God. Resist manfully all the temptations of the devil, and make use of that constancy which never yields, because it is strong in the name of Jesus. Let Mary be your defence.

With regard to Holy Orders, you may receive them if the Vicar General sends for you. Approach the priesthood with fear and trembling. Remember that an angel would hardly be worthy to receive this honour, indeed the dignity of the angelic nature is surpassed by the sacerdotal state. From that hour forward you must be a different man, let your thoughts and desires be in heaven conversing with Christ; detest and fly from the things of earth. Let your preparation be worthy of the great step; make your retreat with fervour and generosity. You will only receive the priesthood once in your whole life, so you must make

the occasion memorable by generous acts, sacrifices pleasing to our Lord ; He will write them in the Book of Life. Omit nothing that can purify your conscience, inflame your heart. You must return to the Sacred Mount a saint, an apostle, deified, if I may use the expression. How much I shall expect from you on your return ! I shall expect you to make giant strides in virtue, I shall expect to see you first in the love of labour, of humiliation and suffering, to find you a model of exact and perfect obedience. I shall expect your charity to be like a flame, setting fire to Calvario. Oh my beloved Calvario ! I should like to see it become a burning bush, a holy place which one can only approach unshod. May the Man-God who died on Calvary inflame our hearts ! *Utinam ! Utinam !* I shall hear from you, I hope, on your return. Remember that when you are a priest you will hold God in your hands ; God will belong to you. How slothful we should be to neglect such a treasure ! I embrace you tenderly, and shall expect to hear news of you after your Ordination. Your loving Father,

A. R.

XXI.

TO DON BELISY AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He exhorts him to virtue.

Trent,

April 13th, 1832.

My dear Emilio in the Lord, to serve whom is our greatest joy.

I was very much pleased with your little letter, not only because I always like to hear direct from you, but also because I perceive that our Lord enables you to stand firm against the enemy who would destroy your happiness. No one can harm us if we only trust in the Father. As Christ says, "He is greater than all" and therefore "no one can pluck them from the hand of my Father." Let us be diffident of our own strength, and trust in the Father. He will see in us His divine Son, whom we have put on in Baptism and in our dedication of ourselves to His service. And where He sees His Son He cannot fail to bestow His love; and certainly if He did not see in us the image of His Son there would be nothing lovable in us. Let us therefore distrust ourselves, and never forget our original nothingness and malice. Ah my dear Emilio, let us support willingly a mere trifle: a little mortification, for an eternity of glory! Be an example to all in the house; try to surpass them all in humility and in love, and then abandon yourself wholly to God: "cast thy care upon the Lord and He will sustain thee." Let us but keep our eyes fixed on Him. Would that the eyes of our mind, now so easily attracted to earth, could rest on Him! The Lord, with the very beauty of His countenance, would be our Master, and we should learn from Him more than men could teach us

What great things should we not learn ! Humility and meekness, obedience and poverty of heart : this science is not taught by men, it makes no show, but it is a holy science, the science of salvation. What a great grace is our admission to this school ; let us be faithful to it. God grant that the school of the world may not lure us from the hidden and solitary school of Calvary.

Talk over these things with your companions ; speak of the beauty of humility and detachment, the sweetness of submission in all things and of holy mortification. You can learn a great deal and do much good to others by such conversations ; they are most useful especially among those who are living together with no other aim than to become good servants of the Lord. St. Aloysius was accustomed to discourse of holy things with his companions during recreation, and his conversation was holy and beautiful as a sermon. You, and all the others too, should do the same, and thus you will become one heart and one soul. Our dear Gentili and the Vice-Superior will help you. I embrace you all tenderly in the Lord and bless you. Your affectionate Brother and Father,

A. R.

XXII.

TO DON CLEMENTE ALVAZZI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Congratulations on his Ordination.

Trent,

July 5, 1832.

The abundance of our Saviour's grace be ever with you my dear brother and fellow-priest!

Your letter, in which you tell me that God the Father and Christ have clothed you in the priestly vestments, fills me with joy, on your account and on ours also. I trust in the mercy of our good God that the high dignity, to which you were predestined, will be a continual spur, urging you to make rapid strides in the way trodden by Christ and the Apostles and the other saintly priests of the New Law, whose names are written in heaven. I hope that, offering the unbloody sacrifice daily with pure hands, you will appease the anger of God, irritated by our sins and those of the people. I hope that the bread of life and chalice of salvation, of which you will partake daily, will give you new and vigorous life, producing an increasing sanctity, and that you will daily grow in sanctity and in Divine love which will make you more and more worthy of the title of *priest of charity*. Ah, dear brother, may we find our delight at the altar; may nothing else appear to us delightful! I thank you with all my heart for the intentions according to which you offered your first three Masses, and I think I have felt the benefit in arranging a difficult business which I had in hand. I beg you to preserve the sacred fire you have received; feed it so that it may burst into flames and set fire to the whole world, if possible. May Jesus who came to bring fire on earth and willed that

it should be enkindled, inflame your heart and through you all other hearts! Happy you if you were called to so great an honour! But remain humble and submissive as a child to your Superiors, and let Christ do everything alone.

I should like Don Luigi if possible, to accompany you to Varzo and that everything should be done as befits a religious. You should be detached as though you came from another world, so to speak; for you have already left your father's house in order to have no other home than the house of God, no other father than God, no other wealth than God, no other hope than God, *Deus meus et omnia!* How fitting is this expression in the mouth of a priest of Christ, a Father of Charity! How delightful is this thought which carries our heart to God alone! There we shall find Jesus, there Mary our Mother, and in Jesus and Mary we shall find God, for Jesus is God, and God is in Mary, as Mary is in God. Let us therefore through Mary unite ourselves to Jesus, and with Jesus to God, now and for ever! Amen.

Continue to pray for the important business of which I have written to Calvario. I am longing to see you all again; in the meantime you must embrace them all for me, especially Molinari. Addio! May Jesus and Mary reign in us.

A. R.

XXIII.

TO THE BROTHERS OF THE INSTITUTE AT TRENT.

He expresses his desire to be with them; he exhorts them to sincerity with God, mutual charity and obedience to Superiors.

Calvario,

October 8th, 1832.

To my dear brothers and companions in the service of God, who dwell at Trent, the grace of Jesus Christ be with you all.

I had hoped to have the happiness of seeing you at the beginning of next November, but certain matters which regard the glory of God, require my presence here. I must therefore remain a little longer in this dear Sanctuary of the Passion of Christ, the cradle, as you know, of the little Institute in which God of His pure mercy has united us. If, therefore, I cannot be with you in person, I will at least visit you by letter, in order to tell you how painful it is for me to live apart from you, desirous as I am to aid you in keeping your holy resolutions. Not that my being near you could bring you any increase of grace, or that my words would be efficacious in sustaining you in temptation or stimulating you to virtue. I know myself to be useless for all this, and capable only of doing harm through my weakness and my failings. It is the love I bear you in Jesus, who is the bond of our union, that makes me desire to have all my dear companions, were it possible, continually under my eyes. For love is impatient to know all, whether good or evil, where the loved ones are concerned; nor will it be content with hearsay, but desires to see and hear for itself, anxious to rejoice in their good fortune, which it can-

not do unless the evil also is known. Besides, being well acquainted with your charity and humility and your generous oblation of yourselves to the Lord, I am not surprised at your wishing to derive spiritual advantage from everything, even from my words, taking in good part and deriving edification from the words of our Lord, which I might repeat to you unworthy as I am. This holy disposition, which I trust is to be found in you all, moves me to tell you (as I would by word of mouth if I were able) what I believe to be most necessary and advantageous to your souls, in order that you may fulfil the holy vocation which you have received through the singular benignity and charity of Christ, and which I trust will remain to you for all eternity.

In the first place, let each one of you earnestly endeavour to be *sincere* with God, that is, to make up his mind to put in practice all that is set forth in the Rules of the Society. This implies that after our entry into the Society we must desire to consecrate entirely and sincerely to God alone, ourselves and *all that we have in the world*, having henceforward no final desire on earth save that of increasing the glory of Jesus Christ and His Church. We must be ready for any sacrifice, and above all be free from attachments to flesh and blood, for these are most pernicious to the man who wishes to give himself heart and soul to God in our Society. The Society should bear as its device the words of Jesus Christ: "Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth. I came not to send peace but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it."

In the second place let each one of you love all his companions most tenderly and bear with their defects in the ful-

ness of charity, condoning them for the love of Christ and even suffering them gladly for his own mortification, not allowing his mind to dwell on them, and, if possible, not noticing them at all. On the other hand, each one should continually observe his own defects and regret them also for the annoyance and pain they cause to others. Let each one consider the welfare and good order of the community to be his own personal concern, and do everything he can to diffuse the good odour of charity and promote union of heart. Seek to draw brother closer to brother, and son to father, i.e., to the Superior, and to remove even the least thing that may diminish that unity of mind and heart which we have in Christ after the example of the early Christians. All who co-operate in bringing about this perfect harmony of wills and hearts are *in Christ*; but those who give occasion to displeasure, resentment or even coldness between brothers, are not acting in Christ, but are rather ministers of our enemy and of the enemy of Christ. We form but one body; each of our companions is a member of that body; therefore let each one do his utmost to promote perfect concord and health in all the members. We should desire especially to see our companions make continual progress in solid virtue, and to this end we should aid the superiors by informing them of all it may be well for them to know for the advantage of the individual. It is by this charity and the interest taken by each one in the spiritual good and discipline of the house, that we shall show ourselves true followers of our Master, who said: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another."

Finally, what I recommend most earnestly is that you strive to become perfect in *obedience*. How sublime, how beautiful is this virtue! Strive, each one of you, to be well disposed towards your Superior. He who is kindly disposed towards his Superior accepts his care with loving gratitude. Reproofs, penances, mortifications are in reality great benefits; let us attach ourselves to those superiors who give them. In all things where there

is no obvious sin, the Superior's voice is the voice of Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us execute the orders of the Superior; what he desires let us desire, what he wills let us will also. This is the way to love God and renounce self. Ah! my dear brothers, let us have no will of our own; let us ignore repugnances and inclinations. Our only repugnance must be for what is forbidden by the Superior, our inclination for what he commands. Let us conquer ourselves. We must be victims with Christ, and immolated like Isaac by the knife of obedience. I consider this virtue so important, because it is the source of all the other virtues, especially in our Society. Therefore I beg you to read in public and to meditate on the beautiful letter on obedience written by St. Ignatius. It might have been written on purpose for us. You will see there that the great foundation of the virtue is Faith, which sees in the Superior the person of Jesus Christ Himself, and takes no count of human qualities. With this foundation you will always be obedient to superiors, whoever they may be; if superiors were despicable in themselves your merit would only be the greater, and you would have greater assurance of serving and obeying the Divine Majesty.

I should like to see you well grounded in these principles, especially when, as on the present occasion, it is my duty to nominate a new Superior; and, trusting that this is the case, I hope you will receive the nomination not only with perfect submission, but also with love and true spiritual joy. I need not say anything in praise of this dear brother, for you know him already, and the fact of my appointing him to the office is a sufficient proof of my esteem. Rather would I conjure you all for the love of Jesus Christ to bear with his defects if such he has—and what man has not? Remember what I said just now, that a superior's defects render the obedience of his subjects infinitely more meritorious and pleasing to God. But he who wishes to be truly obedient, truly a disciple of Christ, will not think about defects, but will consider and love the rare virtues of your new Father, uniting reverence

to daily increasing affection. I most earnestly entreat of you to give new proofs daily of your sincere humility and self-abnegation, and to show that by faith you see not man but God in the Superior. I will add no more, indeed I know that I need not have said so much, but I have wished to say it in order that you may be stimulated to remember those great truths which are the basis of the religious life, and may have a proof of my solicitude and never-failing love for you all. Embracing you all in Jesus Christ our Head and Master, our Joy and our All, I commend myself to your prayers, and I bless you. May the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost dwell in your hearts for ever and ever. Amen.

A. R., *Superior.*

XXIV.

TO DON PIETRO RIGLER AT TRENT.

The Contemplative Life a preparation for the Active.

Calvario,

December 12th, 1832.

My dear brother and companion in the service of the Lord, may He grant us His grace and love.

We must remember that the state of contemplation should not be a state of apathy, but of preparation, a state in which fervour, generosity and grace accumulate, so that we may be ready for the work to which God calls us. We should remain in our seclusion like lions in their lair; whilst leading a contemplative life we should be like a bow bent, like a vessel of generous wine or any compressed force ready to break forth at the proper time with the greater power. It is necessary that we should thoroughly understand the nature of our state. As man is limited, however, it is well to tell beginners one thing at a time, and make them understand first the excellence of the hidden life, devoted to prayer, meditation and mortification. Then, perhaps on the occasion of the first call of that charity *quae urget nos*, it will be time to give them fuller explanations, especially if they seem inclined to indolence and love of ease. You might touch on this point when explaining the duties of the active life.

Of my return I cannot say anything for certain, except that I do not expect to be with you before March. I shall hope to see great things! By great things I mean a great increase of interior light, which enables the mind to understand the value of poverty, persecution, and sufferings borne for Christ, for whose sake alone we wish to leave all

things. Let all understand thoroughly the necessity of renouncing flesh and blood in order to consecrate themselves wholly to God. And he who consecrates himself to God, offers by that fact all that he possesses.

The dear brothers here, who form but one heart with me, embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ. Addio!

Your unworthy servant in Christ,

A. R.

XXV.

TO DON GIULIO TODESCHI AT TRENT.

He recommends vigilance, prudence and gentleness in the direction of others.

Calvario,

December 20th, 1832.

My dear companion in the service of the Lord, to whom alone be all honour and glory. May the gentleness and prudence of our Lord Jesus Christ fill our hearts and minds!

I thank God for what you tell me in your letter! How good is God in bearing with us! Here too, things are taking shape; the dear brothers are a source of continual edification to me. Superiors are most kindly disposed towards us and full of charity. The rules of the house are gradually coming into force, and after Christmas we shall make greater effort to get everything into proper order. I have it deeply at heart that these rules should be observed also at Trent with the utmost exactitude; and it devolves chiefly on you, after the Superior, to be vigilant in this respect.

In doing so, however, I should like you to keep always before your eyes the two words which I have written at the top of this letter: *prudence* and *gentleness*. A Superior must possess both qualities in the highest possible degree, otherwise he will never gain the confidence of his subjects, nor the power to influence them. I recommend to you gentleness even more than prudence, because the former will draw the latter after it, though rightly understood each virtue engenders the other. Gentleness is a most delicate virtue. A slight raising of the voice, a hasty gesture, a quick

glance, a smile, a touch of irony, the tone of voice, the merest trifle may suffice to wound this virtue, for it is as delicate as self-love, of all things the most delicate. Attend to this point and be on your guard, I beg of you. I embrace dear Don Pietro and the others, trusting that the coming festival of Christmas will bring to all the love of Jesus and with it the love of His poverty and mortification and of our own self-annihilation. Let us celebrate these holy festivals in unity of spirit. This community will be mindful of you at Trent, and expects the like charity in return. Addio.

A. R.

XXVI.

TO N. N. AT TRENT.

He exhorts him to persevere in the spiritual conflict.

Calvario,

December 27th, 1832.

My beloved brother in Jesus Christ and companion in His holy service : may He grant us to make progress therein even till death.

If I were not well acquainted with your charity I should have to bring forward a host of excuses for my silence ; but I trust to your forbearance, feeling sure that it will plead my cause better than I could do myself. Although in your letter you acknowledge your weakness and the conflicts you have to sustain, there is evidence nevertheless of your constant desire and resolve to attain to perfection. Have we not good reason to rejoice, knowing as we do that the efforts we make to reach perfection cannot fail to be crowned with success, provided we persevere ? Yes, the victory is certain, Jesus Christ has promised it. The conflict may perhaps be prolonged, but we shall conquer provided we do not grow weary of fighting.

We should use every effort to repress the spirit of envy, that vilest of passions. Its very shadow should be hateful to us. Do we not desire the glory of Christ ? “ Who will give me,” said Moses, “ that all the people may prophesy ? ” Is it not a great joy for us to see our Lord served and glorified by our brethren ? If we are imperfect, and others love God better than we do, let us humble and abase ourselves, but in our pain at seeing ourselves so far behind them, let it at least be our comfort to know that our Lord is honoured by others. This thought greatly encourages

me in the midst of my miseries; and when I behold the good works of other men I can but exclaim in my heart: "I give Thee thanks, O Lord, for Thy great glory."

Let us endeavour also to detach ourselves from the world and to annihilate our self-will, in order that the will of God may alone reign in us by obedience. If when some command is given us, we feel an interior resentment, this shows that self-will is still alive. Let us exterminate this human wilfulness, and then we shall no longer experience any disquietude on account of the measures taken by superiors. On the contrary their commands will be welcome, because we shall have made their will our own. Great progress will be made by a soul that possesses this generosity, and is thus dead to itself and ready to love what the Superior commands, and nothing beyond.

I also recommend to you a true zeal for the welfare of Holy Church and for the salvation of souls. We have consecrated ourselves without reserve to the service of the Church and our neighbour, under the direction of obedience. We must employ all we have, all our strength in these most desirable labours, if they be required of us. Try also to give assistance in the house both by example and by giving information to superiors, to the end that perfect charity and observance may be maintained. I shall hope to find great progress made when I come. In the meantime let us pray. Give my regards to all. Embracing you tenderly in Jesus Christ.

Your unworthy brother and superior,

A. R.

XXVII.

TO N. N. AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Mortification should be regulated by obedience.

Trent,

August 3rd, 1833.

My dear brother and son in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Light and Life of our souls, to whom alone be all honour and glory. Amen.

I have read your letters and this is what our Lord puts into my heart to say to you. Be quite certain of this, that whenever we feel great perturbation and dejection because we are forbidden to practise certain penances, it is a sign of a very serious fault on our part; it is a sign that we are too much attached to these penances and mortifications of ours, be they many or few. This is sound doctrine, taught by all the Saints. We ought so to practise mortifications and penances as to be ready to relinquish them *at the least sign* on the part of our Superior or confessor, and this not only without difficulty but cheerfully, for we should always place our delight in obedience, without a thought beyond. If we do not rejoice in obedience, but become gloomy and discouraged, if it give occasion to questionings and censure of the command; then it is clear that we fall far short of perfection, and that we were grievously deceived when we thought we were making great progress by means of our penances. Alas! Under the sackcloth and ashes lurked the serpent. Therefore, thank God with all your heart for His great mercy in making use of your Superior in order to free you from delusion, and enable you to learn the truth by experience. Take heart now and set to work to overcome this defect. Try to become

perfectly indifferent as to performing or omitting works of penance, so that you may serve God with great liberty of spirit and learn to put your trust in His goodness and not in the penitential works themselves. All thoughts contrary to this doctrine, though they may have the appearance of piety, are but sophisms with which the subtle enemy tries to deceive you. God wishes you to trust in Him alone : He will not fail you if you seek penance rather than obedience. To obedience you will find annexed an abundance of grace. We have now discovered the enemy, the victory will be yours. I expect to hear in your next letter that you intend to rouse yourself to encounter temptation, to renounce your own judgment and to run joyfully in the path which God in His mercy marks out for you. Salute all my dear brothers. Adieu !

Your affectionate brother and father in Christ,

A. R.

XXVIII.

TO N. N. AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the spirit of meekness and interior mortification.

Rovereto,

November 18th, 1833.

My dear brother and companion in the service of God, to whom alone be all honour and glory for ever!

You will not, I feel sure, have taken my silence amiss, because you know well that I should like to be always prompt in writing to my dear companions, if I were not prevented by various cares and occupations. On my return from a short journey which I have been obliged to make on account of business connected with the Institute, I am able at last to spend a few moments with you. I had hoped to see you all this autumn; but God has not been pleased to grant me this consolation. However I hope that we shall meet in the spring at latest.

With regard to the state of your soul, of which you give me a detailed account, I trust in the mercy of God that all will be well. I perceive that the enemy of souls is subjecting you to a fierce and painful conflict; but do not allow yourself to be alarmed, for the victory will be won by confidence in the Cross of Christ. The chief point, I see, to which you must direct your efforts is the acquisition of the *meekness* of Jesus Christ. "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." How beautiful are these words! They describe the true character of Christ and of a Christian. Hold fast to this principle: all anger, irritation, ill-feeling and bitterness come invariably from the devil. With this principle for your guide you will be able to distinguish at once between the spirit of God and

the spirit of evil. Do you find in your soul a spirit of sweetness, of peace, of complaisance, of love? Say at once: this spirit is from God, I must follow its impulse. Is there on the other hand a spirit of contradiction, rigidity, gloominess, fault-finding, hatred? Say at once: this comes from the devil who is trying to seduce and ruin me; I will support it as an affliction, but I will not consent to it, I will not act according to its suggestions.

Happy will you be if you become perfect in meekness, if you destroy within yourself every trace of passion, even that which assumes the appearance of zeal, a zeal that is *bitter* and unsuitable to your office. By studying to acquire this dear virtue of meekness you will gain all other virtues. Obedience, humility, resignation, patience and what St. Philip Neri used to call the mortification of our rational faculty, are all comprised in meekness. This is worth more than all austerities and penances, which avail nothing unless humbly submitted to obedience and the direction of the Superior whoever he may be. It may be that a new Superior has a different method of direction from his predecessor; but this very diversity affords a grand opportunity for the practice of true virtue and is also a test of our interior mortification. The man who cannot adapt himself readily to a change of superiors is certainly not mortified. All that he does, however austere, is no proof of genuine mortification, which must always be founded in docility and pliability of the will; in short, in the renunciation of self. Remember that before Jesus Christ gave us the commandment to bear His Cross, He said: "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself," because it would avail nothing to bear the cross if we did not first deny ourselves. Not every cross is the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ is not that which we take upon ourselves, but that which is given to us by obedience, and includes the renunciation of our own will and judgment. Therefore external penances, which may be compared to the cross, are good if we have first denied ourselves; otherwise it is a deceit of the devil to wish for such things. Hold fast

these principles which come from God and cannot lead you astray. One act of renunciation of your own judgment and will is worth more to you than any amount of austerities. Therefore, render yourself indifferent about these things, without disturbing yourself as to whether they are refused, or prescribed, or merely allowed. Let it be all the same to you. Desire nothing but mildness, peace, obedience and the denial of self. It is better to keep your own heart in the peace of charity than to convert the whole world. Therefore, keep your gaze always fixed on our most lovable exemplar, Jesus Christ, and become lovable and gentle like Him.

Pray for your affectionate father and brother in the love of Jesus Christ,

A. R.

XXIX.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He invites Don Gentili to undertake the English Mission.

Trent,

February 9th, 1834.

I give thanks to God for the light He has granted to you during the spiritual exercises. The way of perfection is all summed up in these few words: a desire of being mortified especially in the *razionale* as St. Philip used to say. Now please recommend yourself earnestly to God, and pray for light and then tell me whether you are disposed with the Divine assistance to undertake the English mission, and to bear with all the difficulties and contradictions you may encounter for the love of God and obedience, even until death. I await your reply.

May the most perfect charity reign in this house: charity is the kingdom of God. "God is charity, and he who abideth in charity abideth in God." The spirit of Jesus Christ is charity. May He dwell with the souls of those who live on the holy Mount, as He dwelt with His dear Mother, who is our Mother also.

A. R.

XXX.

TO DON GIULIO TODESCHI AT CREMONA.

*On compliance with the wishes of the Bishop. On prudence
and gentleness in the direction of souls.*

Rovereto,

March 26th, 1834.

I do not approve of your declining any part of the work offered you by the Bishop. On the contrary (as long as your physical strength will admit of your complying with his wishes), never refuse to do so but receive what comes with simplicity and work for the glory of God. By all means minister to the spiritual wants of the prisoners ; this is a work of mercy very pleasing to God. So also lend your services gladly and readily when asked to give a retreat, and if you are employed with some other priest, adapt yourself to his way of thinking instead of adhering rigorously to the method. God can give His grace by all channels.

I beg you not to frighten the weak by teaching them a perfection beyond their strength. Jesus Christ led His disciples on step by step, and said to them : "I have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now." We must have regard for human infirmity and require only what is strictly necessary and what it can give. This moderation and gentleness is most important for a director of souls. But how can you tell whether what you suggest is either in itself or in its circumstances beyond a person's strength? By noticing whether it produces agitation or discouragement. A suggestion adapted to people's strength always arouses a certain hopefulness, an increase of courage in well-doing. This is a great principle in the care of

souls. I beg you to reflect upon it and to consider attentively the effect of your words, so that you may be able to correct yourself, should there be anything excessive in the things prescribed, or in the circumstances of time or manner. I advise you also to cultivate cheerfulness and holy mirth. Beware of bad humour. Remember St. Francis of Sales and his honey, a drop of which caught more flies than a barrel of vinegar. I write in haste amid many anxieties. But I have not time to tell you everything, so you must pray. Continue to love your affectionate servant and friend in Christ,

A. R.

XXXI.

TO DON FRANCESCO PUECHER AT TRENT.

He appoints him his Secretary. On the principle duties of that office.

Rovereto,

October 14th, 1834.

I hope that our Lord has consoled you during the exercises. He will have imparted to you, I trust, an abundance of grace, so that you may be able to fulfil efficiently the duties which devolve on you in the new office to which you are called by Providence. I desire that you should assist me as my Secretary and that you should hasten to Rovereto as soon as your Superior allows you to depart. Your new office requires entire abnegation of self, because the Secretary, according to the conception of his office in our Institute, must live not for himself, but for the person he is appointed to assist. You cannot even attend to your studies except in so far as your other occupations permit you, and they become of secondary importance in consequence. One of the greatest obstacles that the enemy might put in your way is vainglory, especially while you are here. Therefore watch over yourself and beware of any wish to gain esteem or to display any of the gifts given you by God. Bring these forth at the bidding of superiors and the call of duty, not for a wretched hankering after human applause, but because God commands it and desires that men should see your good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven. Refrain from laying down the law, especially in the company of priests; let your words bear the stamp of modesty, prudence and simplicity. The welfare of the Institute must lie nearest your heart, and to it you must

devote yourself. I need not speak of the strict secrecy which you must always observe as to all matters in which I may employ you, because I do not doubt your discretion, and you will yourself realize how necessary it is. Pray earnestly for the grace of humility and endeavour to become perfect therein. Let Our Blessed Lady herself be your teacher. Adieu!

A. R.

XXXII.

TO DON GIULIO TODESCHI AT TRENT.

On obedience and cheerfulness as a remedy against scruples.

Rovereto,

January 19th, 1835.

Your letter contains nothing but self-accusations. You know already that in your case I do not listen to such accusations, and you should not persist in making them. If you wish to speak of such things, mention them only as fancies and delusions. *Trust* to your superiors. They know you better than you know yourself. What seems to you true is a *lie* of the devil, who wants to terrify you by making you believe yourself to be wicked, whereas you possess God in your heart, though you may not perceive His presence. He is the hidden spectator of your combat. When the trial is over He will manifest Himself by such joy as you have never known before. *Obedience and cheerfulness.* Any thought contrary to this is not from God, but is a malignant suggestion of the evil one. Suffer then in peace, and you will thus mock the enemy, whilst you wait till God's countenance, now hidden, shines upon you once more with its dazzling splendour. "Wait for the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage."

Your humble servant in Christ,

A. R.

XXXIII.

TO THE SAME AT TRENT.

He exhorts him to rest in God with great confidence.

Rovereto,

April 20th, 1835.

Take courage, dear Don Giulio, in your tribulation. Allow yourself to be guided by your Superior, whose words should be to you as the words of God. In this way you cannot go astray. Hold for certain that all is deceit and illusion which presents itself to your mind in opposition to the judgment of your prudent and holy director. From this you will recognize the enemy: take no notice of his suggestions, but keep to obedience. Courage then and cheerfulness! God allows you to fight for a short time, that He may liberate you entirely later on. Consider yourself unfit to pass any judgment on your own case: have no other thought than that of resting in God as represented by your superiors, diverting your mind from certain topics, and remain in a holy cheerfulness. Say often: "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust, I shall not be confounded for ever." It is for our Blessed Lady to deliver you. Offer some little devotion to her; I will join in it if you tell me what you select. I have no time for more, but embrace you in our Lord.

A. R.

XXXIV.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI.

*Instructions with regard to the English mission in his
capacity of Superior.*

Rovereto,

April 25th, 1835.

We have been able to conclude from certain indications that it is God's will that some members of our little Institute should go to England, there to exercise Christian Charity. These signs were—as regards external circumstances—the request made by the Bishop of Siga, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District in England, and the Brief granted by the Holy Father on the 17th December, 1834, authorizing the Superior General of the Institute to accede, if he thought fit, to the request of that Prelate. As regards our own circumstances it is the belief of superiors that the Institute is provided with persons, who on the one hand can be spared for the work and on the other are qualified to assist the Bishop in labours of charity.

That we might yield obedience to the voice of God, it was decided to send you, beloved brother, on the mission and to give you as companions our two dear French brothers, Antonio Rey and Emilio Belisy. You must therefore gird yourself with fortitude and implore of the Holy Ghost that prudence, which is absolutely necessary in order that you with your companions may in such a distant and difficult mission faithfully fulfil the will of the eternal Father who is in heaven.

In the first place you must understand and be persuaded in your inmost soul that the Institute does not seek to become great and illustrious in the eyes of men, but that

on the contrary it would of its own choice remain hidden and even be content to cease to exist whenever this should be for the glory of God. Hence you will be careful never to mention the Institute without necessity or reasonable cause, and you will try to instil this spirit of humility also into your companions.

You must use all diligence in order to become perfect in obedience, and be strictly dependent in all things on your superiors, who from the time of your departure will be none other than the Superior General and such persons as he may place in authority over you. Hence you must be careful not to go beyond your faculties.

Besides practising obedience you must endeavour to destroy within yourself all self-love. Every member of the Institute aspires with confidence in the Divine Mercy, to practise charity towards his neighbour in every possible way, as far as he knows the Divine Will. This, however, cannot be done except by one who has first of all so destroyed in himself all self-love, as not to seek other witnesses of his conduct than God alone. To this end let your very words be unaffectedly modest, so that no expression may ever escape your lips that would tend to your vain exaltation or the disparagement of others. In short, endeavour to hide yourself from the notice of men, and this through an ever-abiding sense of your own nothingness.

You are nominated Superior, but your companions will be your counsellors, especially in what concerns the external relations of the Institute. In dealing with outsiders you must indulge no imaginative hopes or fears, but act with rectitude, truthfulness, loyalty, and reasonable foresight. Your duties towards your companions may be reduced to two, namely 1st to procure their sanctification ; 2nd to regulate their charitable labours in accordance with the spirit of the Institute. The most efficacious means of attaining both objects is what I have just recommended, viz., that you should lead them to gain a complete victory over self-love. Thus they will not only be perfectly sub-

missive to all the commands of superiors (for that is little), but they will be perfectly satisfied and contented, always preserving cheerfulness, equanimity and readiness to sacrifice themselves unconditionally for the good of their neighbour. But you cannot cure their self-love by irritating it; no, you must treat them with the utmost gentleness and delicacy. The means to be employed in conquering the self-love of others are 1st your own example, the spirit of humility and self-sacrifice evinced by your every word and action; 2nd instructions general and particular on that self-sacrifice which is needful in the exercise of Charity, and these instructions, be it noted, must be reasonable and full of compassion without anything hard or arbitrary; and 3rd, the performance of the most humble and distasteful actions which you may enjoin on them when Divine Providence itself affords the occasions, and in such a way that they shall see for themselves that God Himself places you under the necessity of imposing these tasks. You must see that these more difficult commands are proportioned to the strength of the individual. The ability to decide such questions is a gift of God, to be sought of Him with prayers and tears. Always testify esteem and love for each of your companions and treat them *cum magna reverentia*. Avoid also the least touch of scorn or derision; let cheerfulness and love appear in your smile, whilst you cherish sweet and serious thoughts, such as should at all times engage the mind of a Christian, a member of the Institute, and a superior.

You will do all in your power to give full satisfaction to the Bishop, giving his wishes the preference over requests from other quarters. Indeed you must not accept any office that may interfere with the conscientious and perfect fulfilment of the duties already laid on you by Mgr. Baines, or that may in any way displease him. At the same time you cannot out of complaisance towards him, do anything contrary to the spirit or the fundamental rules of the Institute; you must maintain that freedom and independence which are requisite in order that the Institute may exist and effect the good it has in view.

In your relations with the other priests there should be no arbitrary division between you and them; you should treat them with all courtesy and attention and most sincere humility. Above all be careful not to slight them in any way, and not to blame their conduct without necessity especially in their innocent recreations. In order to avoid all appearance of a barrier between you, I should like you to obtain permission from the Bishop to lodge in the College with the other masters, only reserving the house assigned to you for greater retirement when you are in retreat yourselves or giving retreats to others. And when you are in the College do not assume the tone of teachers or reformers, but remain in subjection and tolerate with great indulgence even such customs as you do not like. Be content to gain the hearts of those about you by your modesty and prudence, and wait for the Lord's own time.

A. R.

XXXV.

TO DON GIULIO TODESCHI AT TRENT.

He exhorts him to practise obedience with simplicity.

Rovereto,

May 23rd, 1835.

My dear friend and brother in our Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world. May Mary our Mother console you!

“You are not your own judge.” This one principle firmly grasped would be sufficient to calm your mind and convince you that the thought which torments you comes from the father of lies, because it is a thought directly opposed to the aforesaid principle and to the judgment of your superiors. I therefore bid you once more not to think deliberately about the state of your soul, but whatever that state may be, to go on with your usual occupations and to say to God (it will suffice to do so with your lips lest you should have scruples even about this): “I love Thee, I wish to love Thee, make me love Thee.” These few words, pronounced under obedience, will afford you great relief. Then turn to Mary and say frequently: “Dear Virgin-Mother drive the enemy from my soul.” Another principle which should keep you cheerful is this: *The devil can do nothing to us except what God permits and as long as he permits.* Courage then! “Let the adversaries fly, the Lion of the tribe of Juda has prevailed. Alleluia!”

I expect to hear good news. May God bless you for the sake of His Son Jesus, and relieve you, if it please Him, of your heavy cross, or at least give you strength and courage.

Your unworthy brother,

A. R.

XXXVI.

TO THE SAME AT TRENT.

On the same subject.

Rovereto,

June 21st, 1835.

Beloved friend and brother, may the Paraclete abide in your soul!

To-day, on the feast of St. Aloysius, that most lovable of Saints, and to his honour, I wish to write to my Giulio to remind him to be cheerful in the Lord. Do we wish to maintain this holy cheerfulness? Let us think little about ourselves, and not set ourselves up as judges of our own state, but go on our way with simplicity. We have a good anchor, and can we doubt? Can we give way to sadness? And what is this anchor? Christian hope which confoundeth not. This hope is not for the Saints only but also for sinners like ourselves. Let us all, each one of us hope, and then we cannot perish, for the goodness and generosity of God our Creator is infinite, and man's confidence is so acceptable to Him that this alone induces Him to save, sanctify and beatify man. Be simple and even gay; and do not make too many meditations as they perplex your mind just now. Occupy yourself in indifferent things; give up even study as much as possible. If in spite of this you are still depressed, never mind; it is involuntary and will do you no harm.

We must be patient with melancholy as with our other miseries; but you must not believe or say that it comes from your will. This would be a relapse into the error of

pronouncing judgment on yourself, and this you must not and cannot do. Take even your *sadness* with simplicity and gaiety, and say to our Lord : " I am ready for scourges." May our Lady, St. Philip, St. Aloysius tell you the rest ; may they often be with you ! Add also some innocent amusements as dear St. Philip used to do. Try to divert yourself with little things, which sometimes afford the greater amusement, because their very insignificance makes one laugh, and gives one a lesson in humility at the same time. To all these things add the most perfect obedience to the man whom God has given you during so many years for a father, in whose voice you must recognize the voice of God.

A. R.

XXXVII.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT PRIOR PARK, BATH.

He congratulates Don Gentili on his arrival in England and recommends humility and patience.

Rovereto,

July 9th, 1835.

My beloved brother and dear son in Jesus Christ.

Thanks and benedictions without end be to our Lord Jesus Christ and to His Mother for bringing you safely to the place pre-ordained for your sanctification and that of your companions, united in one heart by the bond of the charity of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can imagine with what eagerness I read and re-read your letter. You might adopt the following practice from time to time. Kneel down before your two companions and put them under obedience to disclose all the defects they have noticed in you, especially in dealing with your neighbour,

and do you reply by thanking them for their charity without justifying yourself. You should afterwards reflect upon the faults which have been made known to you, and if you find them real defects endeavour to correct them. This will not only be a good mortification for your self-love, but when you have discovered what gives offence to your companions, you will the more easily correct yourself and win their affection.

You should not be too confident of yourself or of your own prudence; and even when everything is going on well and people seem to be pleased, do not make too sure that you have done well. Prudence is acquired by long experience; and the young do not perceive how profound and cautious a thing is prudence. The old have greater foresight than the young: therefore have great respect for age. You may also hold it for a safe rule that prudence consists rather in refraining from action than in acting, and that we seldom regret not having acted or spoken whereas we are frequently sorry for having done so. Therefore take notice where you are going to place your foot, before putting it down, and do not act thoughtlessly. We should look at all the circumstances and consider the *consequences* of what we say and do.

I embrace and bless you and my two brothers and sons, your companions in God's service. Treat them with great discretion and be cheerful.

A. R.

XXXVIII.

TO DON EMILIO BELISY AT PRIOR PARK.

On perfect obedience to a Superior.

Rovereto,

August 3rd, 1835.

My dear Emilio, my beloved companion in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be rendered all honour and glory and complete sacrifice of ourselves!

How beautiful a thing is perfect accord between religious and their superiors! A man dies to himself thereby, for it is the charity of Jesus Christ; and through this charity he becomes foolish, that is, he renounces entirely his own judgment. You and Rey have special need of cultivating this sublime virtue, because being always in contact with the same person, you are likely to encounter more temptations than you would in a house where there are several subordinate superiors in addition to the highest Superior. What God desires of you is the complete renunciation of your own judgment and abnegation of your own will in order to follow in your every-day life the judgment and will of the Superior given you by God, in all things where there is no sin. You should meditate on the seventh chapter of the Common Rules, weighing every word contained therein, and put it in practice by God's help with great simplicity. It would also do you good to read the beautiful letter of St. Ignatius on obedience; and implore the Holy Ghost to make you realize its profound and supernatural truth. Without *supernatural light* it is impossible to appreciate the value of obedience, for the light of natural reason will not cease to oppose it with its

sophisms until it has destroyed it. But God gave the Saints light to see that perfection consists not in reasoning but in checking our reason when obedience has enjoined anything by the voice or known will of a Superior.

I believe that the success of this mission to England will depend in great measure *on your being submissive to your Superior and forming one heart and one soul with him*; on your overcoming for the love of God every repugnance thereto; on your readiness to pass over any defects there may be in him who is indeed the representative of God for you, but is not on that account exempt from human infirmity. Yes, I believe that to your obedience are attached the graces which God is prepared to bestow on many souls in England, as likewise the good state of the Institute in that country. I believe that you will have to render an account to the Eternal Judge for this obedience to which you are called, and if you are found wanting in this respect, you will be responsible for the loss occasioned to the glory of God. On the other hand by a complete victory over self and by perfect obedience you will render yourself an apt instrument in the hands of God. And the great things which God deigns to effect by the instrumentality of the humble, the meek and the obedient, He sets down to their merit and requites with a heavenly reward. Since I consider obedience to be the pivot on which everything in the religious life turns, both the spiritual good of the members of the Institute and the fruit of their labours, you can easily believe that it is most painful to me to hear of anything done contrary to obedience and union with your Superior.

In order that you may the more easily preserve perfect harmony, and help your companion to do the same, follow these rules :—

1st. Never offer any objection to your Superior's opinion in public, or in presence of your companion.

2nd. Do not attach great importance to any particular opinion among those which are not contrary to faith, because the one thing that is important is the practice of

virtue. Our Institute cares only for this, and sets little value on science. We say with St. Paul "knowledge puffeth up," and add, "charity edifieth." What does it matter if you know more than others and are not humble? If you set store by your own knowledge or your opinion, you do not yet know what it is to be wise or how to think.

3rd. Beware of a sour or a melancholy disposition and likewise of the spirit of contradiction as being opposed to meekness. Meekness yields always, yields to everyone, yields gently and cheerfully; in a word it is humility in practice. A man who is meek, never raises disputes, though he will join in scientific discussions because, when properly conducted, these do not diminish but rather foster charity, their only object being the attainment of truth.

Pray earnestly for your unworthy brother, and loving father,

A. R.

XXXIX.

TO DON ANTONIO REY AT PRIOR PARK.

On the necessity of humility and prayer.

Rovereto,

August 21st, 1835.

My dear companion in the Divine service,

I owe you an answer to the kind letter you wrote on the 4th of June, before you left Monte Calvario. I must have recourse for pardon to your charity now and on similar occasions of delay which may occur in the future. You must not take such delays as tokens of little love or respect on my part, but regard them as effects of my circumstances and the freedom with which I treat my good friends and brothers.

I perceive from your letter that God grants you light to see your faults, and thus sets you on the way to correct them. This second grace will follow on the first, for everything comes from God and we must ask Him for everything with most earnest supplication. This is a truth which should be a great comfort in our weakness and impotence. If victory depended on our exertions, we should lose heart and hope, seeing that we are so weak, so evil, so utterly worthless, while the assaults of our enemy are so violent and incessant. But if we look to the Omnipotent God for everything, we shall abase ourselves before Him, and pray with humility and great confidence.

God calls you to humility, to a perfect humility. Abase yourself, annihilate yourself, yield always under all circumstances, make no account of yourself, of your thoughts, your learning or your words. Commit yourself, as though you were dead, to Jesus Christ ; take no thought

for your life on earth where our sojourn is so brief. Reprove yourself and grieve over your faults. Consider the least and most ignorant of your brethren as your superior, and let your Superior be to you as God on earth. *Vos Dei estis*. Suppress the spirit of censure, cost what it may; extinguish every spark of contradiction, much more all opposition and complaint, every expression of bitterness, of sadness and ill-humour. Let your charity be tender and let it guard your humility. "Charity is patient, is kind, charity envieth not, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, endureth all things." The conflict must be incessant, our sorrow and purpose of amendment must be renewed each time we fall. Our prayers should rise continually to God, that we may obtain the grace of amendment. In this way alone can you be faithful to your vocation. Our Institute professes humility, charity, obedience, self-denial, endurance, and nothing beyond. This mission to England is a special grace, and it will be blessed if each one of you three does his duty. May none of these first three stones be rejected by the Heavenly Builder! Assist the weakness of your companions by your own virtue and they will do the same for you. By thus giving yourself and all that is yours to Christ, as though you no longer lived, you will be able to say at the hour of death: "I have finished my course." Who knows how near that day may be?

I am expecting to hear from you about yourself, your companions and the English mission. May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you all abundantly!

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

A. R.

XL.

TO THE SAME AT PRIOR PARK.

On the same subject.

Rovereto,

September 13th, 1835.

My dear brother and companion in the Divine service.

Your letter of the 1st of September gives me reason to hope great things: God gives you light to know yourself; the conflict still awaits you, but you must never grow weary or lose heart on account of the wounds you may sometimes receive. Be sure of this, that the Divine Goodness, in sending you to England, has wished to place you in a practical school of virtue where you will not be forsaken. It is possible that in another position you might never have discovered or extirpated the root of your defects. Therefore be courageous in your endurance, and with *time* and perseverance you will succeed in divesting yourself of the old man, and return to that child-like state which is so desirable.

As far as I can see, your description of yourself is exaggerated. Only I should like to see a greater abundance of charity. Try to soften your heart and become loving, a true lover of God and man. How easy love makes everything! It takes away all bitterness and infuses great sweetness and gentleness. Love is humble; and humble and meek are those who possess it. "Charity endureth all things, hopeth all things." When we hope for anything from God through love, then we are freed from excessive solicitude which sometimes wears the semblance of zeal. Indeed, when we are faithfully fulfilling the duties of our state, we should live in tranquillity and not be perturbed

even by imprudence on the part of superiors. Should there be anything of the kind it would not be our fault, and we should only distress ourselves about our own failings, leaving all else to God.

However, I wish to tell you for your consolation, that if through human weakness you really cannot sustain the struggle I will recall you; but I have great hope in our Lord that this will not be necessary. Find peace by *keeping within the sphere of your own occupations and your personal duties*. Pay no attention to what other people do, because you are not responsible for them. If you do this, you will move God to help you, for He takes delight in men who are careful to serve Him and have no other care. There is one thing you must not omit, and that is to write to me, so that I, far away as I am, may know your circumstances thoroughly and be able to help you. This charge which I lay upon you will be one of your duties. Do not forget to pray for me and for all our companions here. I embrace you and your companions in the love of Jesus Christ and wish you all the heavenly gift. Adieu!

A. R.

XLI.

TO N. N. AT TAMIÉ.

He encourages him to persevere in his vocation.

Rovereto,

October 25th, 1835.

My dear brother in the Priesthood,

Permit me to address you these few lines. I love you tenderly without knowing you. Although your Superior has never written to me on the subject, I am aware that you are troubled with temptations against your vocation. Can it be that these temptations are due to pusillanimity? Are you dismayed by the gloomy and solitary spot where you dwell? Can it be that for such reasons as these you would turn back on the road you had begun to tread? Is it possible that for earthly motives such as these you would renounce the priceless grace offered to you by God in His mercy, the grace of vocation to a Religious Institute? Does God, our good God, merit so little regard? Shall we not accept a light cross for love of Him, when He has borne so heavy a cross for us? Oh! the hardness of our hearts! My dear brother, are you not afraid that God will be sparing of His gifts if you are so niggardly in your sacrifices? What will you offer to God if you do not give the best victims, those mortifications which cost the most? Will you reserve for Him only the first-fruits of Cain? Unhappy will you be if you do this! I cannot find tears enough to weep over your misfortune. In short, I advise you not to adopt any such resolution *for human and earthly motives*. A question of such importance, on which will perhaps depend your eternal salvation, must be examined by the light of eternity, not by the false glare of the pas-

sions. Act now as you would wish to have acted when your last hour comes. Recollect that you have been sent by your Superiors to a work which may have important results for the glory of God, namely to a new foundation; and if you desert the ranks like an unfaithful soldier, you will assuredly be answerable to God for the effects of your bad example and for all the good hindered by your flight. May the Holy Ghost enlighten you. Listen to no voice but His. I bless you and wish you every good gift from the Eternal Truth, and I trust that you will be aroused by this fresh admonition from your unworthy Superior, and resolve firmly not to make a false step through want of courage and confidence in God.

A. R.

XLII.

TO DON ANTONIO REY AT PRIOR PARK.

Advice in time of temptation.

Rovereto,

December 1st, 1835.

My dear companion,

Thanks for your letter of the 17th of November. You accuse yourself in it of many faults, but I do not believe you guilty of them. We must distinguish between the temptations we sustain and the consent we give them. I can well believe that you are molested by thoughts of envy, self-love and anger, and that your superiors are generally the object of them. For the enemy would have gained a great triumph if he could succeed in making you yield a full consent to these thoughts; likewise it would be a victory if, by dint of tormenting and wearying you, he succeeded in making you fall a prey to despondency, or throw away your arms. Now I would fain hope that what

troubles you is for the most part simply a temptation and goes no further; this I deduce from the annoyance you yourself experience and from your self-accusation. I trust that you will not give way to despondency, but believe firmly that Jesus Christ will assist you and deliver you from all your enemies, if only you persevere in fighting and praying. Now, in order that the malignant spirit may not prevail, either by extorting your consent or by frightening you, I propose the following means of resistance in addition to the ordinary means:—

1st. Do not expect too much from yourself; nor desire to be freed from your faults instantaneously, nor be disquieted if you do not perceive an immediate improvement.

2nd. Try to be as amiable and cheerful as possible in conversation, for a man who can maintain his soul in a holy cheerfulness is less subject to temptations of envy or motions of anger. To this end, take the most amiable St. Francis of Sales as your model.

3rd. Resolve to show the greatest possible kindness and charity towards all, for if you love all men in charity you will especially love your Superior, and you will compassionate his defects or ignorance, for who is there amongst us exempt from ignorance? Shall we consider ourselves sages? No, let us ever repeat in our heart the words of Solomon: "I am the most foolish of men, and the wisdom of men is not with me. I have not learned wisdom and the science of the saints is not with me." How can a miserable man, however learned he may be, believe himself to be something? This sole reflection is sufficient to extinguish every inclination towards envy or contempt for those who know less than we do.

I thank God for teaching you by experience how great compassion we should have for others, and that we should not expect from them more than their infirmity allows. This is a most important truth. But you yourself admit that you have only recently had this light from God, and that for a long time past you have treated others in a very

different spirit. Learn from this to be full of compassion towards all, even those who do not yet know the great truth you yourself have learned so late. Now that you understand why brotherly love is so much recommended in the New Testament, you must become a master therein by your example, by most affectionate and humble charity towards your companions, so that this brotherly love, which is so important, may overflow in your heart and fill their hearts also. This is a short way to sanctity. Our Institute has no more important precept than this, from which it takes its name. On this everything will depend; so I recommend charity to you in an especial manner. Love the few scholars you have in Jesus Christ; remember me to your two companions. May the Holy Spirit fill you with Himself, and with the spirit of sweetness, love and perfect union. It is charity I want, not learning. I have a great dread of learning, and a great love for charity. God grant that learning be not a source of division amongst us! God grant that charity may edify and unite us all in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom alone be all honour and glory for ever!

A. R.

XLIII.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT PRIOR PARK.

He advises Don Gentili to adapt himself to English manners and customs.

Rovereto,

December 8th, 1835.

My dear brother and companion in the Divine service,

I recommend you and your two companions to make yourselves English, by degrees, in all things wherein there is no sin. In this way you will put in practice the saying of St. Paul: "I have become all things to all men." In all things where there is no sin, it is not expedient to oppose the customs of the people; every nation has its own customs which are good in its eyes. You must adopt those of the country in which you dwell, and they should seem good in the eyes of your charity. An excessive attachment to Italian, Roman or French customs is a defect and a great defect in the servants of God, whose true home is heaven. Seek to acquire gentleness, and magnanimity which dwells in gentleness. Pray to God that He may grant you perfect patience; and if you perceive any signs of weakness in your companions, let not this produce in you perturbation or resentment. Wait patiently; and God will console you by giving them the grace of amendment in His own good time. This will be the more easily effected if you win their affection. Never lose courage at the sight of your own faults, but let your confidence in God be great and constantly renewed. All will turn out well, if you are gentle and humble, if you are careful not to make changes without letting me know, and if you do not attempt too much.

I embrace with great affection my three English brothers, and trust that they will be one heart and one soul.

A. R.

XLIV.

TO DON CARLO ALIPRANDI AT VERONA.

On confidence in God amid the dangers that threatened the Institute.

Rovereto,

December 9th, 1835.

My dearest brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,

The life of a Christian is divided between consolation and aridity. Consolation is no sign of progress, and aridity is not a sign that we are losing ground. We must live by faith: "the just man liveth by faith." Faith should keep you from presumption in consolation, and from diffidence in time of aridity. Jesus Christ is ever the same "yesterday and to-day, now and for all ages," Oftentimes faith and grace are in our souls, without our knowing it; we must not confound them with the *feeling* of faith and grace. Nor can it be supposed that our spiritual condition changes from one state to another in a short time, and without some grave cause. Let us be content with having a good will, or at least the desire to possess this, and for the rest let our confidence be principally in our good Father and our good Mother.

It is most important that, by means of prayer and every kind of good work, we should offer violence to the Lord during the storm raging round the Institute. Let our prayer be that God direct us in all our ways, that we be all united in His name, conducting ourselves as becometh Saints, and that "He send labourers into His harvest."

By this prayer we shall not interfere with the designs of God concerning His Church, which are unknown to us. We know not in what parts of the world it may please God to establish the Institute. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

A. R.

XLV.

TO DON ANTONIO REY IN ENGLAND.

He recommends charity even towards oneself.

Rovereto,

February 19th, 1836.

I rejoice to hear that you taste more and more the peace of the Lord. Be careful, as I told you before, not to be too hard on yourself and not to expect too much. We are weak, and we must bear with ourselves without losing heart. No matter how many defects you may imagine yourself to have, you cannot deny that you at least desire to rid yourself of them and attain to perfection. Well, then, this desire will be fulfilled. God hears, God grants holy desires, and especially the "will of the lips" as the Palmist calls prayer. "Thou hast granted him his heart's desire and hast not denied him the will of his lips."

Do not try to force yourself in those things not of obligation to which you feel an insuperable repugnance: a repugnance, by the way, that is imaginary, a delusion and deceit of the enemy. You will gain profit by making acts of deep humility, combined with great confidence, so that the predominant thought in your mind may always be the *goodness of God*. This goodness is chiefly manifest in guiding us to eternal salvation, and giving us the means, material and spiritual, of attaining thereunto.

I quite agree that it will be a good thing for you to restrain your imagination as much as possible. You will find it a help to substitute much *vocal prayer* for mental prayer; but on this point you will be directed by your Superior. In your companions love Christ and God. You should be all love, compassion, desire of sanctity for them and for yourself, so that you may all three be *children of peace*. Love, tranquillity, peace will lead to humility, to the gentlest and most perfect obedience. Pray for your brother in Christ,

A. R.

XLVI.

TO DON PUECHER AT VERONA.

What he should pray for during the Spiritual Exercises.

Milan,

March 18th, 1836.

I have missed your company and help, and was glad to get your letter. Pray that you may come back to me if it be the will of God; and I think this prayer will be pleasing to Him.

You do well to take the opportunity of making your retreat; use every effort to unite yourself to God, to sacrifice *everything* to Him, so that you may be *wholly* His, retaining nothing of yourself that is not His. Make the sacrifice especially of your self-love, and ask for the *spirit of death* to all things visible. Pray for me also, as I hope to make my retreat soon after Easter, so that I may be converted once for all to the Lord and cease to be as ungrateful as I now am.

Thank you for the news you give me of the dear brothers. Try to help them by giving them an example of humility and sweetness, and by your pious conversation, not delivered in the tone of a teacher but of fervent and simple expansiveness. Prudence and discretion will make you of great use; therefore ask these gifts of the Holy Spirit. If you cannot have conferences and other practices of Common Life, try to supply the deficiency by your pious and edifying conversation.

Embrace dear Don Antonio and tell him to make haste and become a Saint; and to pray that we may all become Saints; for in this consists all our good and the good of the Institute.

A. R.

XLVII.

TO DON GIUSEPPE SETTI AT TRENT.

On waiting in patience for the fulfilment of his vocation.

Rho,

May 7th 1836.

My dear brother and friend in the Heart of our Beloved who was slain for us!

You may think, perhaps, that I have forgotten you, as you have never yet received an answer to your two letters. But you must not think anything of the sort. So far from forgetting you, I remember you before the tabernacle and at the foot of the crucifix. If I delayed to answer, it was in order to think over what I should reply, or rather to ask an answer from the Father of Lights. Even now I cannot give you a complete answer. Still I can assure you that your sentiments, as expressed in the second letter, will produce great fruit in due season, if you keep them in life and vigour with the waters of Divine Grace. The Holy Spirit has given us some words that are full of consolation for those waiting for the Lord: "There is a time for all things." Christ re-echoed what had been previously expressed by the Holy Spirit, by those words which He addressed to His apostles before ascending to heaven: "It is not for you to know the times and the moments which the Father hath placed in His own power." Therefore let us await with patience the time and moment of the Lord. This sacrifice, by which we cheerfully adapt ourselves to the marvellous designs of Providence, is very precious in His sight. It is a preparation for the hour of joy, which often comes when we least expect it. The spirit of Christ will unite us closely in sweet friendship and brotherly love,

as only Christians can be united. What sword can then separate our hearts? "What shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress? . . ." Ah! May God grant us this charity, and then shall we conquer all our enemies by loving them!

Before long I shall see Don Puecher, whom the Bishop has given me for my secretary. How pleased I shall be to see him after an absence of two months!

Write to me and love me in our Lord. May Jesus and Mary bless you!

A. R.

XLVIII.

TO DON ANTONIO REY IN ENGLAND.

On resisting temptation with confidence in God.

Rho,

May 8th, 1836.

From the whole of your letter I gather that the Evil Spirit continues to place all the obstacles he can in your way. It is all in vain, my friend; do not fear him. Remember that you are fighting under the standard of the most glorious captain, Jesus Christ, and a glorious leader, the Virgin Mary. We need only perseverance, continued acts of humility, prayers and sighs from our inmost soul. All that now seems hard, bitter and even unreasonable, will, if you persevere, be one day your greatest delight, and you will see that in these very things was hidden the secret of your salvation. Yes, my dear friend, things that appear strange and unreasonable are sometimes the very means appointed for our purification; and these means belong to an order of intelligence infinitely higher than ours, Divine. If you look at the arrangements of your Superior in the light of God, they will be the dearer to you,

the more unreasonable they seem to be. Have no doubts : *nolite timere*. Nothing is lost : every contradiction and sacrifice is a treasure. I recommend you not to be harsh with yourself, but to humble yourself continually with great gentleness and sweetness. Be persuaded of your own nothingness, and then you will not be surprised at the assault of your passions.

Embrace dear Belisy and your dear Superior for me. Adieu !

A. R.

XLIX.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI IN ENGLAND.

On the candour necessary in writing to Superiors : on sweetness and charity.

Rho,

May 8th, 1836.

In this quiet spot where I have come to make my retreat, I seize a few moments of leisure in order to answer your kind letter of the 11th of April, which gives me on the first page a view of the beautiful home God has given you. May He grant that we may find no earthly paradise, but only a path strewn with crosses that will lead us to the Heavenly Paradise !

You ask me if you are to give me an account of the good effected by your instrumentality. I say yes : but you should weigh well what you say, so as to avoid the least shade of exaggeration and any spirit of vain-glory. It is well to say always a little less, rather than a little more, and to make use of expressions and a style 'unaffectedly modest and humble. You should mention not only the good but also the evil, and particularly the latter, because if I am informed of what goes wrong I may be able to find

a remedy, whereas relations of prosperity and success only afford me a certain consolation, which is not, after all, quite what I have in view. Above all, I urge you not to let yourself be induced by the Evil Spirit to conceal anything from me, or to do anything in secret, or to take any step on your own responsibility, for fear I should prevent it if I knew about it. This would be a grievous delusion, so be on your guard. Finally, the best example of letters describing with humility the good that God is pleased to effect by our means, is to be found in the letters of St. Francis Xavier. What sincere humility we find in the letters of that great servant of God!

I dread greatly the spirit of *vanity* and the spirit of *bitterness*. Both are bad, and they often go together. Make every effort to overcome them. Jesus Christ thought only of doing His Father's Will, and He is an *ocean of sweetness*. Ah! beg Him to give you a little of His ineffable and infinite sweetness. Learn of Him because He is meek and humble of heart. Consider well every word you utter; let your words be as gentle as possible. Do not find fault with your companions, but rather praise them; speak to them with the sweetness of St. Bernard when talking to his brethren. Judge favourably of them, manifest the esteem in which you hold them, encourage them, and make them conceive great hopes of advancing in virtue, all founded in God and in the infinite virtue of His grace. What rapid progress is made by one who is thus supported and encouraged by his Superiors! It is a mistake to suppose that we can infuse humility into people by depressing and humbling them. No; it is rather by praising them in the Lord that we make them advance, and by humbling *ourselves* sincerely, *without any affectation*, and by actions rather than by words. Read calmly the third chapter of the second book of the Imitation of Christ. Adieu!

A. R.

L.

TO DON ANTONIO REY AT PRIOR PARK.

Practical rules for obtaining peace of mind.

Domodossola,

August 7th, 1836.

My dear companion in the Divine service,

On receiving your letter of the 18th of June, I considered seriously what might be the cause of your disquieting thoughts and the persistency with which they molest you. How delighted I should be could I discover the remedy, so that you might enjoy peace of heart and sanctify yourself in your vocation! Listen to what I am going to say, and judge if my observations come from God, as I believe they do.

All your troubles come from this: 1st, you do not realize thoroughly that *outside yourself there is for you neither good nor evil, that all your good consists in your own sanctification, and all evil in losing some degree of your sanctification*: 2nd, *You do not understand that all external things, not dependent on your will (whether they be good or bad in themselves) may be and are means employed by Divine Providence in the work of your sanctification.*

In fact I perceive that your disquietude arises from the conduct of your Superior, in whom you perceive many defects. Now I will suppose that these faults really exist; is it you who commit them? No. Then they do not injure your soul. When you do your duty within your sphere, your own soul is holy, you are safe. What more do you want? Why disturb yourself about faults committed by some one else? Why should you lose your peace

of mind, and expose yourself in consequence to the temptation to be less humble, less mortified, less docile, less obedient? In this way you disturb yourself about what does not concern you, and in disturbing yourself and losing your peace of mind you do yourself real harm.

You will say that in the meantime things are going wrong and damage is done to other people and to the Institute.—But this is not a good reason; such zeal does not proceed from a good source. I ask you: are you guilty of the mischief caused by another's fault? Certainly not, because you are not the author. If you are not the culprit, why then should you afflict yourself, why should you be disturbed? Rather should you adore, in perfect tranquillity, the Providence of God which permits the evil, and pray without ceasing that light may be given to those who need it. If you wish to do something in order to counteract these evils, I will tell you what you can do. Endeavour to make progress in charity, humility, mortification and self-sacrifice; for in this way you will gain a great deal, and the Institute will attain its end as far as you are concerned. Impress deeply on your mind that the one end of the Institute is *the salvation and perfection of our own souls*. If, without minding other people, you attend to yourself and employ all your energies in the abasement of self, in submission and obedience, you thereby *sanctify* and *perfect* your own soul, and enable the Institute to attain its end. Leave the rest to God.

Suppose that your Superior were always to do what you thought proper, and you never renounced your own will or had to bear contradiction, and so remained a slave to your passions, what good would this do you? *Quid prodest* if all England were saved and you were lost? What would it profit you if everything in the house were to your liking, and you were not to the liking of God? Let your Superior act as he thinks fit; let him act according to his lights, according to his spirit; and do not expect him to act according to yours. Even when it seems more prudent to take the contrary course to the

one he chooses, do you abase yourself, humble yourself. Say to yourself: It is not your business to settle this; God inspires him to act thus; God knows why. You do your duty and think of nothing else. What anxieties you make for yourself! "One thing only is necessary." Humble yourself, humble yourself, and you will find peace. You are here to practise virtue and not to find fault with other people. God wants this only: the salvation and perfection of my own soul. This is my high vocation. "Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous and troubled about many things." With these and similar exhortations addressed to yourself, you will accustom yourself to restrain your imagination and acquire self-command; you will then be able to distinguish what does concern you from what does not. If you were Superior, you would act according to God's inspiration in the direction of others. As you are a subject, your sanctification is to be found in reducing to submission your thoughts and will. In this consists your great, your only good! Courage then, my dear brother. Believe me, these things are only *temptations*; they should not alarm you. You will easily conquer if you are not disheartened, yes easily, but not without the cross. *In hoc signo* ✝ *vinces*. May Jesus bless you!

A. R.

LI.

TO THE SAME AT PRIOR PARK.

Other remedies for sadness and discouragement.

Stresa,

October 19th, 1836.

My dear brother,

I have been obliged to delay answering your letter of the 6th of September, owing to my occupations. Do not imagine that I do not understand your sufferings, and that I do not feel a true compassion for your state. But I perceive that there is less malice in it than you think; it is a question of an external agent which does violence to your will, and what can this force be but the principle of evil, the enemy of the human race? It is on this account that you must not be alarmed, even when most hardly pressed. The devil can bark, *he cannot bite*. The remedies are the following :

1st. Do not exaggerate your own *malice* (for the devil wants to discourage us by making us believe ourselves to be worse than we are; the most violent temptation is not sin). Endeavour rather to know your own *weakness* and *ignorance*. These two things are never sufficiently understood, and they produce self-distrust without discouragement.

2nd. Cry out unceasingly to God: "Lord I suffer violence. Answer Thou for me. O Lord defender of my life and my salvation, &c.;" and make use of other expressions of firm confidence in God contained in the Psalms.

3rd. As you yourself suggest, you should have some diversion and something to occupy the imagination, which is the faculty that the devil works upon to your detriment.

Take care not to get absorbed in your thoughts, especially gloomy thoughts.

4th. Do not busy yourself too much with *theories* of any kind; but delight in making yourself as a child. Nourish your affections with *simple* devotions; *love* rather than *reason*; rather repeat the same prayer over and over again than seek new forms of prayer.

Finally, let your whole life be grounded on *indifference* to all that is not sanctity, and dispel all delusions of vain-glory and the esteem of men. You will triumph without doubt, but the struggle will be hard. Hold it for certain that Jesus Christ is infinite, and it would therefore be folly to say that we have abused His grace beyond forgiveness. His mercy and goodness *have no limits*. Therefore, even though I be obstinate and perverse, I may always say: *In te Domine speravi, non confundar in æternum*; no, no, *non confundar in æternum*. Addio. May Jesus and Mary enlarge your heart with their ineffable consolation.

A. R.

LII.

TO DON GIACOMO MOLINARI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Directions as to how he should receive Don Pagani.

Chivasso,

October 23rd, 1836.

My dear brother in Jesus Christ, to whom be all honour and glory for ever!

Before reaching Oleggio I met Don Pagani, who had taken his leave at the Seminary and was on his way to join us; he will soon be at Calvario, if he is not there already. Admit him to the first Probation, which he must go through with regularity and exactness. Make him understand the *seriousness* which characterises our Institute. When this Probation is concluded, put together his certificates, give him a letter of recommendation to the Master of Novices and send him to the Sacra di San Michele. The chief danger for a person of mature age, of learning and piety, is that he should not be able to lower himself to practice of childlike obedience. You should therefore impress on him the necessity of becoming once more a disciple and a child, and tell him to expect contradictions which will enable him to renounce his own judgment and will. I desire that without any compliments or explanations, you should treat him from the first not as a visitor, but a brother. All will be well I feel sure. It is precisely with men who already possess much virtue that we should act with freedom and boldness. I leave you to determine whether he should make a long or a short retreat. Addio! Pray for us all.

A. R.

LIII.

TO DON ALESSIO MARTIN AT TAMIÉ.

On perseverance in the Divine service.

Turin,

November 25th, 1836.

My dear brother in Jesus Christ, to whom alone be all honour and glory.

I am greatly consoled by your letter which only arrived to-day. I perceive that God has made you understand the importance of renouncing your own will in all things, and that He has put into your heart the resolve to acquire this humility by means of obedience. Indeed, this is the only true good; nothing beyond this is desirable. Happy is the man who has renounced all that he possesses for the sake of Jesus Christ. Happy is he who has become a child for His love. While nature leaves not a stone unturned in order to hinder us from gaining happiness, while nature shudders and recoils, the faithful heart tastes how sweet the Lord is. Be constant, therefore, under this trial. Let all else go, but conquer! And the victory is certain, because our Lord does not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength. If we are wounded in the struggle, let us not lose heart; if we return to the assault we shall finally win the palm. Pray for me, who am the most sinful of men. I salute you all *in osculo sancto*.

A. R.

LIV.

TO DON ANTONIO REY AT PRIOR PARK.

He exhorts him to banish sadness.

Turin,

March 11th, 1837.

My dear brother and father in Christ,

I feel sure that you will excuse my delay in answering your letter of the 25th of November. Do not imagine on account of my silence that you are not to write to me, for your letters are always most welcome.

Coming to what concerns us, you must not think, my dear brother, that you alone are assaulted by the enemy. If I told you of my own experiences, you might be in a position to say *solatium est miseris socios habere malorum*.* But the narrative of my miseries would be useless. Rather, for our mutual comfort let us consider, in the first place, that the prayer, by which we plead for charity, humility, abnegation and other virtues pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, cannot fail to be heard, because Jesus Christ has promised to answer. Faith then, prayer, constancy: Jesus has won the battle for us. In the second place, even the prayer of sinners is granted when made in the name of Jesus Christ, for the goodness of Him to whom we pray is infinite. Let us open our hearts then to consolation. I think it is a great mistake to give way to sadness and to judge harshly even of oneself. We should enlarge our hearts. "I will run in the way of Thy commandments when Thou hast enlarged my heart." If we are ill-humoured habitually, everything will go wrong, and we shall not be able to

* It is a consolation to the afflicted to have a companion in misfortune.

preserve charity, humility, submission to our superiors. But if we are good-tempered everything will be sweet and easy; our acts of submission will be full of sweetness. Let us build upon a foundation of faith, hope, holy joy. Rejoice in the Lord and everything will become easy. Obtain this grace for me also from God and the Blessed Virgin, and write to me.

A. R.

LV.

TO EMILIO BELISY AT PRIOR PARK.

On perfect obedience as the compendium of sanctity.

Turin,

March 11th, 1837.

Do not think that your letters are unwelcome to me and do not cease to write, if I do not answer at once. I always pray that the Lord may make you all great in *humility*, in *self-sacrifice* and the most perfect *charity*. Try to become an example of submission and obedience. You can certainly do nothing more pleasing to the Divine Majesty, for this is what the father of lies tries to destroy in you by sophistry and I will say "by philosophy and vain deceit." Let us cling to the words of Christ: "If any man will come after me let him deny himself." How sweet is the charity of submission! O blessed ignorance! "Run hither or thither, thou wilt find no rest but in humble subjection under the government of a superior," says that golden book, *The Imitation*. This wisdom is universal: it embraces all truths; other systems embrace but a part. Let us adhere to the whole. I have had good news of your brother, thanks be to God. Add io.

A. R.

LVI.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI AT PRIOR PARK.

On the question of religious vocation.

Turin,

March 11th, 1837.

Your dear letter of the 27th of February was most opportune, as I was beginning to be anxious at having no news. As to the doctrine concerning vocation to the religious life, it is true that, in a general way, it is a question of counsel, not of precept; consequently there is no sin in not following the call, for sin always implies violation of a precept. I grant that the doctrine contrary to this is false, that it is the cause of much disquiet to certain souls, and that it has been abused. You must refrain therefore from being too strict on the point. On the other hand it is certain, that he who does not obey the call to religious life when he might do so, deprives himself of an infinite good, and the privation of spiritual good is a great injury to one who has the light of faith. Besides this, we know nothing of the obligations entailed on another by the internal communications of grace; for it is certain that in particular cases, God requires of some men what He does not require of all, and that which is not commonly speaking a *precept*, may become so to the individual. But we should never insist too strongly upon this in the direction of souls, for it is God's secret, and we can only exhort souls to examine themselves and not to stifle the interior inspirations of the Holy Ghost through self-love or passion.

I recommend fortitude and cheerfulness with your companions, whom I embrace and bless in the Lord.

A. R.

LVII.

TO DON ANTONIO REY AT PRIOR PARK.

Expresses his regret that Don Rey should have left the Institute.

S. Michele della Chiusa,
March 24th, 1837.

I have heard what has happened with the greatest grief. Were you really guided by the spirit of God in your resolution? Or were you led by your own spirit? This is the terrible question you must put to yourself. Is it possible that a priest who should be all love of perfection can abandon the path of perfection? And why? For wretched motives, motives which concern the present life, not the future. If you examine yourself you will find that the reasons which moved you to take so important a step, were not reasons connected with your soul or God. Will it facilitate your eternal salvation to have thrown off the yoke of our Lord, and to have renounced the cross of Christ? Will this be any consolation at the hour of death which may be nearer than you think? Then "what things a man shall sow those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting." Let us think what we are about. For my part I wish to be able to say: "I am innocent of his blood." If you choose to bring ruin on yourself, it shall not be said that I abandoned you, rather would I do everything in my power to bring you back. I will permit you, therefore, to return to the Institute with sentiments of true humility and a deeper knowledge of the wiles of your enemies; not only do I permit you to come, but I exhort

you, I beg, I conjure you by the love of Jesus Christ. Ah! do not abandon unworthily the way of abnegation and the cross, the way by which we are called! This cross and this abnegation constitute the spirit of the Institute: be guided by this spirit. I feel sure that you will write and give me great consolation! I trust that I shall not only have you back, but have you back improved. May the spirit of Christ console and strengthen you.

A. R.

LVIII.

TO DON ANTONIO REY.

On the same subject.

Stresa,

May 4th, 1837.

I know well that you are not bound to the Institute by vows. If you were bound by vows, I should not have inquired whether you were moved by the spirit of God or by your own spirit: in such a case there would have been no doubt. But precisely because you are free to remain or to leave, do I think you should put a similar question to yourself; precisely because you are free is there danger of the hallucinations of self-love which is sometimes a good theologian, out of place. What I desire is that, in the presence of your Creator, setting aside all subtleties, you should examine "whether the motives actuating you proceed from the thought of eternity and the desire to please God or from some petty considerations concerning the present life." The spirit of God is the spirit of Jesus Christ, and the spirit of Jesus Christ consists of humility, meekness, abnegation, mortification. This is the spirit of God: what is contrary to this is the spirit of the devil:

“whosoever are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God.”

Do not think I have the temerity to decide whether you have sinned or not sinned in doing what you have done. I am bound to say you have not sinned, for a man cannot condemn his brother unless he knows him to have violated a *precise obligation*. Now, I do not find that you are under a precise obligation to remain in the Institute; therefore I conclude, as far as I am concerned, that you have not sinned. But what is this decision of mine? It cannot set your conscience at rest. In your place I should not feel satisfied, but should say; “he that judgeth me is the Lord.” We must determine the point as if we were at the hour of death, in the hour which so many *frivolous distinctions* vanish, distinctions that sometimes enable us to lull our conscience to sleep but do not modify the judgment of God. The law I would have you consult is the law of love; I wrote to you under the persuasion that you were a true lover of Jesus Christ and desired to prove your love. If your object is to be as pleasing to Jesus as possible, if the end of your desires is *perfection*, you will put the right construction upon my words. Every burden borne for the love of Jesus Christ is in this sense the sweet and light yoke of Jesus; every mortification endured with resignation and humility in imitation of Him, is the holy and blessed cross of His disciples. “If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross.” These words are expressions of tenderest love, and lovers understand them. They do not refer only to the religious vows or to obligations under pain of mortal sin; they invite us to higher things. The law of grace is not the rigorous Mosaic law, our justice must abound. “Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” At the same time if you say to me: “I wish to avoid mortal sin and nothing more,” I have nothing to answer, but I should beseech the Lord in silence to dilate your heart, for Jesus Christ is found only by love, and love is what He desires, love without

limits or bounds. I repeat what I have said, I should never think of passing judgment on you on this account.

As long, however, as I am persuaded that you seek perfection and desire to despoil yourself of self in order to put on Jesus Christ and His humility and mortification, allow me to exhort you to consider seriously whether the perfection of your soul was what you had in view. That the step you have taken is conducive to perfection I cannot believe, nor can you in your inmost heart, I feel sure. I have read your letter carefully, but I find in it no indication of spiritual motives. A lament on the part of wounded self-love is what it amounts to! Place this motive in the scale with the example and maxims of our Divine Master and you will see what it is worth. On the other hand, that you should have come across a superior who does not suit you is a pure accident (disposed, however, by Providence). And will you let a change of state depend on a mere accident?

Finally, did I not ask you to let me know if you could not support the temptation caused by your relations to Don Luigi, promising to remove you elsewhere? But you, without writing to me, have taken a step that is the cause of great grief to me, great surprise to the Bishop, no little inconvenience to him and to us! What has become of prudence, charity, courtesy? I attribute this not to any malice on your part, but to the violence of the temptation that made you precipitate matters. It is precisely on this account, persuaded as I am that you did not act with due tranquillity of mind and that your fall was accidental, that I not only do not refuse to receive you again into the Institute, if your sentiments are such as become a disciple of Jesus Christ Crucified, but I invite you to return, and think this a duty imposed on me by charity. I conjure you to pray, to think of death and to make acts of self-contempt; it is necessary to acquire the habit of judging oneself. May God bless you! Console me by an answer in accordance with my desires. Addio.

A. R.

LIX.

TO THE DEACON N. N. AT S. MICHELE DELLA
CHIUSA.

The indifference required as to the Priesthood.

Stresa,

May 7th, 1837.

I have heard with great grief of your disturbance of mind on the occasion of the ordinations. Is it possible that a member of the Institute of Charity could be so foolish as to vacillate in his vocation simply through *fear* that Superiors might defer his ordination to the priesthood? What have we come to, my dear brother? It is a thing that horrifies me, for it shows, either that you have not grasped the principles of the Institute, or that you have not courage to profess them. I exhort you then to think seriously what you are about; consider whether you have decided to enter this Institute, embracing its principles, because I do not wish you to lie unto God and yourself. In order that you may consider the subject with greater maturity, I shall place before you the principles which those must embrace who wish to enter the Institute.

1st Principle. It is necessary that any one desirous of becoming a member of the Institute should be persuaded that he is *unworthy* to be a priest (which was the feeling of the Saints); that he should dread so great a *dignity*; and if his superiors intend him to assume it he should be inclined to beg them to defer, rather than to accelerate it. All the Saints acted thus: only pride or levity could suggest the contrary.

2nd Principle. In general, one should never aspire to a higher dignity, but remain quietly in one's own state,

as the rule enjoins, and as humility, the foundation of our profession, requires.

3rd Principle. For the same reason, and in order to please God and be employed in good works with the greater freedom, we profess the most complete *indifference* to every state, office, place and everything else.

4th Principle. We promise entire *obedience*, accommodating ourselves to the ordinances of superiors as ministers of Divine Providence, without inquiring into the reasons of their conduct, much less entertaining unfavourable thoughts or suspicions concerning their arrangements.

It is necessary that you should seriously reflect upon these four points, which form the substance of your profession. If you do not wish to embrace them, or they do not please you, you are free to leave the Institute; for I only want those who appreciate these principles and *sincerely* purpose to follow them (with the Divine aid): others *I will not have*, for they would lie to God in our profession.

My dear brother, you are free to remain or to leave, but if you stay with us, you must rid yourself of worldly prejudices and begin to comprehend the spirit of our profession. What good would it do you to listen to so many instructions and have so many beautiful rules written in a book and not in your heart?

If, after reflection, you desire to remain with us, you must make a *promise* in writing to conform yourself henceforward, with God's help, to the four principles mentioned above. Without this determination you would soon fail in your vocation, for you may be asked things much harder than to abstain from receiving Holy Orders. As a matter of fact this command was never given you, and all your perturbation arose from a *suspicion*.

My dear brother, for the sake of your own soul, enter into yourself, become a *man* in Christ, and put away the imperfections and false judgments of *childhood*. Do not judge according to the standard you have brought from the world, or the examples of certain unworthy clerics;

but judge according to the *truth*. I hope you will console me, and that you will profit by your unfortunate fall. May God bless you and illuminate you with His Holy Spirit. Amen. Your brother in Christ,

A. R.

LX.

TO THE SUBDEACON NICOLO LORRAIN AT S. MICHELE
DELLA CHIUSA.

*He approves his dispositions concerning his promotion to the
Priesthood.*

Calvario,

September 25th, 1837.

Your letter has given me the greatest consolation, because it manifests sentiments that I should like to see in all my brothers and dear companions. That which proves to me that it is written according to the spirit of God, is that in spite of the fear, or rather terror, you experience at the thought of the priesthood and your petition to be dispensed from so great an honour, you conclude by saying that you will recognize the Divine will in the command of your Superior. And in so doing, my dear Brother, you are acting wisely, according to the doctrine of the Church and the Fathers, who teach unanimously that there is no more secure way of learning the Divine will than perfect obedience. I give thanks to God, therefore, for your dispositions, and in the meantime I shall not fail to recommend the matter to our Lord, in order that God may inspire me and make known to me what He desires of you. You must not on this account devote yourself with less ardour to the studies necessary to the priesthood; on the contrary, I recommend you as strongly as I can, and, if you like, I will command you, to

use your utmost diligence and put to profit the talent our Lord has given you. I hope you will do this, and in so doing you will please God, from whom I beg for you and for us all every good gift. Your servant in our Lord Jesus Christ,

A. R.

LXI.

TO THE BROTHERS ENGAGED IN THE SERVICE OF
GOD IN ENGLAND.

On the signs by which we may ascertain the Divine Will.

Calvario,

October 2nd, 1837.

As some other Brothers are preparing to join you, I seize the occasion of sending you a few lines, to remind you of the vocation to which you are called in the holiness of charity. I beg and beseech of you all, for the sake of Jesus Crucified, not to turn either to the right or to the left, but to keep straight on in the path to which you are called, that is to procure your own sanctification. Sanctity consists not in any work of genius or human glory, or in success in temporal undertakings, but rather in practising those virtues which Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Exemplar of our souls, exhibited in Himself, especially on the cross. These virtues are humility, poverty, abnegation, obedience, mortification, patience, and an ardent charity which contains them all. This charity does not lose itself in subtleties, but proceeds with simplicity, seeking not the things that are its own but the things of God and our neighbour. On this foundation stands the Institute of Charity which you have embraced, and which you ought to have continually before your eyes, in order to persevere therein till death, not only in body but in spirit

also, in order that you may not deceive yourselves or lose sight of the only true idea and form of the Institute, born on Calvary, springing from Jesus Crucified, inasmuch as from Him are derived those virtues which constitute the end of the Institute.

You, my dearest brethren, have so much the greater need of fixing your hearts on this end, esteeming the practice of the evangelical virtues as the only good (since all else is vanity), because God's service, in your present position, is attended by not a few difficulties, perils and distractions. All these, however, you may overcome by co-operating faithfully with the grace which God does not refuse you; and then the very obstacles will become means of perfection and trophies of your future glory. This co-operation with grace consists in nothing else than in keeping your vocation ever in view as a guide to your steps, conforming your conduct with perfect submission to the spirit and the letter of the rules.

In the first place let each one beware of an excessive confidence in his own judgment; rather let him be persuaded that, among all the dangers of religious life, the most insidious is an exclusive resort to our own private judgment, because we too often forget that our reasonings are shortsighted, limited and often fallacious, very different from those of God, who comprehends unerringly all things past, present and to come. Therefore, instead of adopting the result of his own reasonings, let each one take for his guide the sublime and most simple rule of the Divine will, in imitation of Christ, who, when accounting for His operations, did not say that He acted through this or that motive, but always said that He acted for the accomplishment of the will of His Heavenly Father, and in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, which contained the expression of that will. Hence our study, dearly beloved, should be directed wholly to acquiring a knowledge of the Divine will, not to arguments or disputes among ourselves as to whether this or that thing be better

or not, according to our limited human views. Let us only be solicitous about discovering the signs of the Divine will in order to execute it with fidelity and simplicity, with interior peace and without reasoning against it. If you consider attentively, you will perceive that there are three principal signs by which we may infallibly recognize the Divine will, if we seek it with a pure heart.

The *first sign* is the *law of God* fully and perfectly manifested to us by Jesus Christ. This law is called by theologians *voluntas signi*; on which account it is also written: "this is the will of God, your sanctification." If then, it be God's will that we should sanctify ourselves, we may be certain of working in conformity with this most amiable and holy will when we labour unremittingly to purify ourselves from every, even the slightest stain of sin, and to acquire all those virtues which constitute holiness. When we are in any way disturbed or perplexed, let us prefer that which is most conducive to sanctity, most in harmony with the teaching of the Gospel, and then adhere without any hesitation to that course which best exercises our abnegation, poverty, obedience, and contempt of self. By acting in this manner we are sure not to go astray, and are certain of acting in accordance with the most sublime and excellent rule of the Divine will, which we desire to follow, and for which purpose we have joined the Institute.

The *second sign* by which the most adorable will of God is made known to us is *obedience to our superiors*. I say this to all, in the first place to the Father Rector and the Father Minister, who should precede the others in giving an example of obedience, and then to all the other brothers, their subjects. It is well to reflect that this is the doctrine of the Catholic Church, which teaches and has always taught that perfect obedience to superiors is the safest way to ascertain the Divine will and to perfect and save one's own soul. We must not allow our private judgment, rash and

presumptuous as it is, to rebel, because in thus doing we shall rebel not against man but against God, who manifests His will by means of man. It is true that there may be error or defect in the Superior's command from our point of view, but there can be no real error or defect in God's will, whereof that command is an indubitable sign. Hence it is to be believed that in executing that command, though there be some intrinsic error in the command on the part of a Superior, we are sure to fulfil the Divine will, we shall have done quite right from a supernatural point of view, and God will make the Superior's blunder subservient to His wise designs, which are impenetrable to our ignorance and finite intelligence. The only exception to this rule is when the Superior commands anything sinful. This case excepted, let our intellect be silent; we must neither judge, nor criticise, nor make any calculation (save only to make some representation to a superior in all humility), but with a lively faith and certainty of obeying God, we must obey promptly, simply, humbly and unconditionally.

When the will of God is not made evident by either of these two signs, because there is no command of a superior on the subject, and the matter is not determined by the law of God or love of holiness, it is necessary to have recourse to a third rule, very useful to superiors, and to their subjects also when left to their own judgment. This *third sign* of the Divine will is *the voice of Divine Providence*, which is heard in external circumstances and events. This voice should be listened to and examined by the light of reason, aided by that of faith, but quite logically, excluding everything of a fanciful, superstitious and arbitrary nature. To do all the good we can, in circumstances presented to us by Providence, not sought after by us, to perform it without unjust preference and according to the right order of charity: this is what God certainly requires of us. God is essentially the supreme good, therefore He wishes from us every possible good; the good, that is to say, presented to us by His

Providence, of His choosing, consequently, not ours. This third sign is subordinate to the second, as is the second to the first. If a thing is enjoined by the law of God we must do it; if obedience requires it we must obey. If even obedience does not determine what is to be done, we must try to ascertain the will of God by the light of reason and of grace; moreover in order that we may not be led astray, we should not anticipate, but follow Providence in external events.

From the first and second of these signs arises the necessity you are all under (if you desire to adhere closely to the will of your God) of meditating, with attention and love, on the rules of the Institute you have embraced, since they are an epitome and application of the law of Jesus Christ; and these rules are equally binding on superiors and subjects.

Wherefore, let each one of you endeavour to live with great confidence in God, closely united with his own Superior, in whom he should behold the image of God Himself. Be united also, all of you, in the strictest bond of perfect charity, bearing with one another's defects out of an abundance of heart-felt love, having great care not only of your own self-improvement, but also of that of the other brethren, edifying them and co-operating in their sanctification, according to the spirit of the Institute and the will of superiors. If you comply with this advice, your humble brother, who writes to you with all liberty in the Lord, hopes to participate, hereafter, in the plenitude of your merits and prayers; he loves you all much in the Lord, whom he implores to bestow upon you every blessing, grace, consolation, fortitude in affliction, and in the end a crown of imperishable glory.

A. R.

LXII.

TO DON PAGANI AT PRIOR PARK.

On ill-health and the temptations that may arise from it.

Calvario,

December 10th, 1837.

My dear brother and companion in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified, who is our crown.

I am grieved to hear that you are suffering, though I am not surprised that you should find the English climate somewhat trying in the beginning. There are two things I should like to make sure of: first, whether your ill-health really depends on climate, for as you have suffered in the same way in Italy, there may be other causes for a recurrence of the complaint; secondly, whether it is likely to be serious, so as not to be cured by change of air and precautions. I should like to have the opinion of a good doctor, because if the case were really serious I would recall you to Italy at once. I would rather not do this, however, without some necessity, for as our Institute has in view the virtue and imitation of Jesus Christ Crucified, I should be the means of making you lose the opportunity, given you by God Himself, of practising a more generous and manly virtue, and of imitating more closely Jesus Christ, who cared not for places or times or actions, and thought only of obeying His Heavenly Father even *unto death*. Besides, if you were recalled, not by the spontaneous action of superiors, but because you yielded to a miserable temptation and the desire of bodily comfort, I fear that you would not be satisfied, but only be the more disquieted. You would remember the words of Christ: "no man putting his hand to the plough &c.," and you

would wish you had died at your post rather than obtained a recall. After all, what is death? Listen: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Assuredly, the man who would not choose to die labouring for God's glory rather than turn back, is not fit for the kingdom of God. The spirit of constancy is characteristic of this Institute which takes its name from Charity, for love is strong as death; it was on Calvary that the Institute was born, and its ensign is Jesus Christ Crucified, for in the death of Christ power is clearly shown forth. Hence our most cherished devotion, as we are told in the Constitutions, is *the offering of our own blood*.

Let us therefore renounce flesh and blood, for the Master has said: "he who does not deny himself *cannot be my disciple*." "He who is born of God is spirit," and we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. I know what the tempter will say: *It is all very well for those who are called, but perhaps I am not called*. This is an insidious thought worthy of the father of lies; in order to discover its fallacy you have only to see whence it comes. Does it come from self-love, from the flesh, from the love of temporal things? Then it does not come from God, nor from the Spirit of Christ which always invites us to what is perfect; therefore it must be a deceit of the devil. He will say: *I have no strength to do great things*. But Christ in our heart speaks very differently. He makes us repeat a thousand times; "I am nothing," but at the same time "I can do all thing in Him who strengtheneth me." The tempter will continue: *It is not that I shrink from the practice of virtue, but this or that place does not suit me because I cannot get exterior recollection there*." You must reply: Where do we read that Christ enjoined exterior recollection? Christ said *follow Me* to the multitude; *follow Me* amongst heretics and enemies; *follow Me* everywhere; He said nothing else. Where Christ is served there is recollection. I may not make a Gospel to suit my own liking or prejudices. The tempter will per-

sist: *I shall not advance in spirit unless I am able to pray undisturbed, unless I have the good example of a regular community, &c.* But you will answer: I shall make progress if I do God's will and not my own, if for His love I give up every kind of gratification, even spiritual. My only hope of spiritual advancement is through the grace of Jesus Christ, and this will be granted to me in proportion to my fidelity in following His voice and carrying out the mission I have legitimately received. In this way you will effectually close the serpent's mouth, and he will not dare to reply, perceiving he has to do with one who loves and trusts his Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and Him alone.

That which would otherwise seem most bitter will then appear sweet to you; for Christ will comfort you wonderfully. Thus you will secure the object I had in view in sending you to England. My reasons were; 1st, that you might be a comfort and support to Don Luigi; 2nd, that you might strengthen all your companions in their holy vocation by word and example; 3rd, to strengthen the bonds of union, charity and obedience among them. These are the principal duties I have laid on you. Be a comfort to Don Luigi; preach the evangelical virtues to all, fostering generous sentiments in the souls of your companions, especially a genuine submission and attachment to Don Luigi, who is to you all the minister and interpreter of Divine Providence and Divine Goodness. On this account, it is all the more necessary that you should not let the least disturbance appear outwardly; you must pour out your heart before the Crucifix. In the meantime, I shall expect the doctor's opinion, for I will not let you remain where you are if there be any real danger. Tell them all that I embrace and bless them from my heart, and that I pray unceasingly that God vouchsafe to sanctify them in humility, in abnegation and in every better gift so that all may participate in the glories of the Master whose disciples they wish to be.

A. R.

LXIII.

TO FORTUNATO SIGNINI AT PRIOR PARK.

On fortitude and obedience.

Calvario,

December 26th, 1837.

I am quite satisfied with the account you have given me of yourself. Full information is just what I require; you should not hide anything from me. The material difficulties of the mission do not alarm me; but I wish the virtue of our dear brothers were a little more manly, and that they were not like so many reeds shaken by the wind. Is this the virtue of our Institute? We do not want children clinging to their mother's apron-strings! I pray God to deliver them all from their temptations, which are simply *childish*, and are all the consequence of want of stability in obedience and faith in the Divine will. God grant that you may all acquire a great soul, capable of faith and sacrifices for the love of God! I beseech Him unceasingly to teach you all how to remain united with your Superior, one heart and one soul with him in our Lord's name, acting unanimously with courage and cheerfulness, without taking thought for the future, or losing heart for every passing cloud. You should give an example to the others of blind obedience, of *courage* and *cheerfulness*. On the joyful occasion of the Birth of the Infant Jesus, I wish you all humility of heart and simple obedience, and that each one may serve God in his own state, with contentment from morning to evening! Embrace all for me in the Heart of Jesus.

A. R.

LXIV.

TO DON PAGANI AT PRIOR PARK.

He encourages him to persevere in spite of all difficulties.

Calvario,

December 27th, 1837.

My dear brother and companion in the Divine service,

I thank our Lord that you are better, and beseech Him, from my inmost heart, to deliver you also from every spiritual temptation. Oh! let us remember that the spirit of the Institute, to which God has called us, is a *most generous* spirit, and in order that we might have our model always hanging before our eyes, our Institute was destined to be planted on Calvary. What! Is it possible that we shall let those natural affections common even to pagans prevail over the affections of grace peculiar to Christians and the priests of Christ? Ah! May God be the only object of our affections, and let us tread all else under foot when it is a question of obedience and self-denial! The servant of Christ counts as nothing his father and mother, his friends, the world. What are we seeking? We are seeking not virtues that make a show, but solid virtues, self-abnegation, obedience, abandonment to Divine Providence, the fortitude of the true religious, greatness of soul, long-suffering, patience, &c. Is it not clear that, in sending you to England, God desires to give you an occasion of perfecting yourself in all these virtues? Be grateful then, in the humility of your heart, because the designs of our Lord give you such a grand opportunity of practising these virtues.

When God loves certain souls and wishes them to make progress, He puts them to the proof and exposes them to

trials in which they are constrained to recognize their own failings, and in which self-love finds but little satisfaction. Such is God's most loving design in regard to your soul, which He has chosen for great things. You were in the Seminary where your self-love was gratified in many ways. God brought you to S. Michele, where you did not receive so many marks of esteem, and learnt to know yourself better, beginning to detach yourself from the present life for the love of God. God saw that this did not suffice, He saw there was still a human and natural sensibility in your heart, and that it was necessary to substitute for this the pure charity of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, you are sent far from your family, your country and all your friends. God says to you as to Abraham: "Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred," and He sends you among a nation of heretics, whose very language is unknown to you. What a grace! How precious a gift in the eyes of faith! What a pledge of God's love to your soul! There you can really cast off the old and carnal man, there you can discover your weaknesses and imperfections, there you can choose God for your only Father, Paradise for your country. There, too, you can practise abnegation, humility, obedience in all its perfection, there you can cease to be a child and become a man strong in spirit and in virtue, there you will gain experience, knowledge of the world, greatness of soul, true liberty of spirit, abandonment of self to the provident care of God.

Is it possible that the devil suggests to you that your labours are wasted, and that you listen to him? I cannot believe it. What more need you do than obey and remain in subjection to God in obscurity, as Jesus Christ did for thirty years for our example? This is the one object set before you. As for the success of the Mission, commend it to God and then leave all in His hands. But you certainly do a great deal if you afford consolation and relief to your Superior, Don Luigi; if you co-operate in the sanctification of your companions by inculcating these same principles, by encouraging and supporting them in their

temptations, by causing them to imbibe the spirit of the Institute, a spirit of *simplicity* and *tranquillity*. You will do much if you urge them to love and respect one another, to be united in one heart and soul, to think only of doing their duty in a spirit of *indifference*, and to put away thoughts of the future. These are most insidious thoughts, where the devil, by means of the imagination, lays many a snare. Ah, my dear brother, be brave and cheerful! Let us give ourselves to God *joyfully* and *generously* and we shall not regret it! Rest assured that your life in England is the best Novitiate you could possibly have. It is a precious gift of God, to which you must faithfully correspond. Many good wishes for the coming year.

A. R.

LXV.

TO N. N.

He shows that what is known as blind obedience is in reality most enlightened.

Calvario, 1838.

Though I have been so long in answering your letter, you must not think it was unwelcome, but rather attribute the delay to my numerous occupations. As for what you tell me about your studies little answer is required. Since the time of your Novitiate is sacred to the acquisition of virtue and sanctity, everything else is merely accessory, and your Father Master will tell you what to do.

I should, however, have thought it important to say something on the doubt that has crossed your mind respecting *blind obedience*, if your kind Master and Superior had not already informed me that the doubt has passed away. All the same, I will say a few words on the subject, reminding you in the first place that the intimate

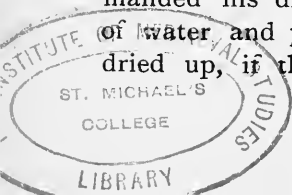
knowledge of the exceeding excellence of blind obedience paid to superiors for the love of Jesus Christ, is a thing altogether Divine and can only be attained by those to whom the Holy Spirit communicates this supernatural wisdom. Therefore, I would exhort you, my dear Brother, to pray most earnestly for this heavenly illumination, annihilating yourself before the throne of the Majesty of God, beseeching Him to make you understand the lessons which His Son, our crucified Lord Jesus Christ, has given us from the blood-stained altar of the cross.

An intense love of our Lord Jesus Christ would also lead us to the understanding and the possession of this treasure of blind obedience, for this burning love would make us understand the wonderful teaching and example which He left us regarding it. This example and teaching can be understood only by those who love Him devotedly, whereas it has ever been and ever will be *to the Gentiles foolishness*.

Another way by which we may comprehend and appreciate the value of this virtue of blind obedience for which the spiritual man is ready at all times to give his life, is a firm and lively faith in the authority of Holy Church, as the pillar and ground of truth, and in the example of the Saints canonized by the Church. For he who has this lively faith in the spirit and teaching of the Holy Church, his Mother, will be fully persuaded, without any further reasoning, that blind obedience is an act of the most exquisite virtue and of the highest merit before God. Holy Church, most undoubtedly, has ever taught this truth in all ages and in all places, and has glorified the heroes of obedience. Therefore, he who believes the wisdom of the Saints to be true wisdom, will not doubt that the blind obedience which they one and all practised is right, reasonable and most holy. Or, if a doubt should ever cross his mind, he will condemn his own blindness and folly, and embrace unhesitatingly the doctrine of the Saints; for they, by reason of the light of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, understood the force of those words of Christ: "He that heareth you, heareth Me."

These words of our Divine Master are indeed the foundation of blind obedience; for they were spoken by Christ to the Church in the person of His apostles, and the Church speaks and acts by her ministers and by the superiors of holy congregations and religious orders. The man who believes Christ blindly, renounces, indeed, all inferior reasons, but only that he may attach himself to the highest and most universal reason. Thus also the man who blindly obeys his superiors, renounces, in a certain sense, his own individual reason and private judgment: but at the same time he is following his own reason in another sense; for it is reason, illuminated by the grace of God, that convinces the obedient man that it is advisable to obey, because of the intrinsic beauty of obedience.

Observe here, my dear brother, the mistake you have made in saying that there are only two authorities which can command us, namely, our own reason and the superior. You leave out the principal authority, which is God Himself, who speaks by means of the superior, an authority far more to be trusted than our own individual reason, which is liable to be deceived, and does in fact deceive itself whenever it refuses to obey blindly the will of God, manifested by the mouth of the religious superior, His minister and representative upon earth. I say that our *individual* reason is always deceived when it persuades us not to obey. For when is it that we deceive ourselves? When, instead of seeking that which is best adapted to our true end, that is the acquisition of virtue, of perfection, of humility, of self-abnegation, of mortification, of penance, in one word the imitation of Christ crucified, we stop short at some human consideration, at something of a nature altogether different from that of the evangelical virtues. For instance, when that celebrated hermit and great teacher of perfection commanded his disciple to carry daily a certain quantity of water and pour it on a plant which had long been dried up, if the disciple had disobeyed on the pretext



of following his own reason, he would certainly have deceived himself and acted wholly against reason. For, though it was indeed true that the act commanded, the watering of the plant, was useless and unreasonable as considered only in reference to the plant itself, yet if we take into consideration the other more exalted end, which consisted in producing an act of humility, self-abnegation, mortification, in a word, of obedience (for all these virtues are contained in obedience), we shall see clearly that obedience to that unreasonable command was most reasonable, most wise, and most holy. So acceptable to God is this blind obedience that He not unfrequently testifies His approbation of it by miracle, as in the case in point; for, so we are told, the withered plant revived and flowered again. And now, who does not see that in every act of obedience, paid for the love of God to our superior, there is included abasement and abnegation of self, humility and the love of God, and that these virtues are the greater and more beautiful in proportion as the command given is more repugnant to our own sense and judgment? And if Jesus Christ has taught us that our perfection consists in this annihilation of self for His love, and after His example, is it not plain that there is always a reason for obeying any command whatsoever, the ultimate reason to which all other reasons must give way? For the desire of becoming perfect through the annihilation of self for the love of Jesus is so great and luminous a reason that it eclipses all other reasons. What higher reason can we have for any action than the attainment of the end for which we were created, and its attainment in the most perfect way taught us by Christ? The obedience that is usually called *blind* is therefore *most enlightened* and by it we renounce all vain and frivolous reasons in order to follow the one and only reason that is true, most solid and most blessed. But by whom can it be understood save by one who loves Jesus Christ? By whom can it be felt save by the simple and humble of heart? Who is illumined but the poor in spirit, the

child whose eye is single and pure? "I confess to thee, O Father, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."

In order then that we may attain to the understanding of these treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, we must prostrate ourselves in the dust beseeching the Father that He draw us to Christ our Lord, for undoubtedly that must be true which the oracle of Divine truth has spoken: "no man can come to me except the Father draw him." For if the Father, hearing this prayer rise from the depths of our hearts in the name of His beloved and only begotten Son, shall open the eyes of our mind and free them from the mist which our passions have spread before them, then we shall not only see the intrinsic and inestimable worth of the evangelical virtue of blind obedience, but we shall perceive also what would have been the fate of our poor bark if it had had no better pilot than ourselves and our miserable will and reason. We should have been tossed hither and thither at the mercy of the raging billows, and the light of our unaided reason would only have served to show us our desperate condition. We shall then perceive that the only star by which we can safely steer is not poor, useless human reason, but the one light which is ever bright, beneficent and constant, the will of God; and that the pilot who can steer our course by this auspicious star, is the Superior, whoever he may be, given to us by the Mercy and Providence of God. For, whoever the Superior may be, he is always the ambassador of God, the interpreter of the Divine will and the minister of the Divine mercy (unless he command us to do anything that is sinful).

We shall see all this with respect to our own salvation, but, if Christ's lowly wisdom is bestowed upon us, we shall perceive this truth more fully in relation to the good which may be done through our means to our neighbour or for God's Holy Church. For it is God, the Father of all men, who cares for all men, and it is Jesus Christ, the Head of

the Church, who cares for the Church, which He has purchased for Himself with His own Blood. And God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son choose those only to work for the Divine glory and the good of the Church who, after the example of Christ, crucify themselves and die to self by means of obedience, self-denial, humility and love of the Cross.

It is the follower of holy obedience alone who truly and completely offers himself to Christ and the Father, and he alone is chosen, according to their good pleasure, to minister unto them in all those good works to which he has been predestined from all eternity. Let us then cling more and more to holy obedience, renouncing self once for all, and let us strive after so perfect a grace with the assiduity of humble and uninterrupted prayer.

This, my dear brother, is what I expect of you and of all our dear Novices. I expect that you will be so enkindled with Divine love as to be able to set fire to the four quarters of the earth. I expect to see you full of the heavenly wisdom of Jesus Christ which is foolishness to the vain reasoners of this world: obedient, docile, meek, enlightened, dead to the world, living to God, glorying in knowing nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, from whom I beg for you health and benediction now and for ever. Amen!

A. R.

LXVI.

TO DON MARTIN AT S. MICHELE DELLA CHIUSA.

He exhorts him to labour zealously for the good of the Institute.

Domodossola,

March 3rd, 1838.

My dear companion in the Divine service,

I thank you for the information you have given me. I shall make use of it with all prudence, as my duty requires, and only for the sake of charity. Each one of you, according to the spirit of the Institute, should co-operate within the limits of his office, for the improvement of his brothers as well as his own. The rules on this point open a field for the exercise of the most delicate charity, a form of charity entirely unknown to the world, which does not dream of its existence. Each one of us, girding himself with long-suffering, hopefulness and resignation, must endeavour to do all that lies in him according to the gifts bestowed on him, for his own improvement and that of his companions, and for the advancement of the labours of charity undertaken by the Institute. Then, when he has done his best within the limits of his own office and grade, he must remain in perfect tranquillity, looking to God for everything, and not disturbing himself if things are not quite perfect. This is a path of peace, whereby we may with ease and sweetness draw nigh to God.

My dear Don Alessio, do your utmost to take with you to Tamié a great love of God, great self-sacrifice, perfect obedience, faithful and loving observance of the rules, order in all things, studiousness, zeal for the salvation of souls

and all the other virtues that should adorn our state. In this way you will gain great merit before God and become one of the foundation stones of that house. You can do all this without overstepping in any way the limits of your state, grade and office. It suffices that you neglect nothing within the sphere of your duties that can contribute to this great end. For all the rest look to God with patient perseverance and unceasing prayer. The practice of Christian virtues and the spirit of prayer are really the most efficacious means of assisting in the great work. Embrace for me all my dear brothers of S. Michele. I am sure that they pray for me, as I daily pray for them; nevertheless I am never weary of begging your charitable assistance for

Your servant in Christ,

A. R.

LXVII.

TO DON PAGANI AT PRIOR PARK.

He exhorts him to confide in God, and asks for minute details of the English mission.

Calvario,

March 16th, 1838.

My beloved brother in our Lord Jesus Christ, our strength and our consolation.

Your letter gave me great pleasure, as did also the good account which I received from another source. Have no doubts, my dear brother, put all your trust in God, for whose honour you are in England, and for whose love you live and work. He will give you in His own good time an abundant recompense, surpassing all that you can imagine or desire. In virtue of the firm hope of this reward, which will infallibly be yours in this world and in the next, remain

tranquil and joyful, and do everything with fervour and alacrity. God, whom you serve, will enable you to conquer all your foes, and to tread under foot the love of country and family and the whole world, for His sake. Write to me from time to time, giving me full and positive information about yourself, your companions and your surroundings. I should like my dear brothers in England to send me such minute and exact descriptions that on reading their letters I might fancy myself amongst them. In the meantime, may God bless you. I embrace all with great affection, recommending to each one constancy in his vocation, generosity and greatness of soul.

A. R.

LXVIII.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

On the spirit of meekness and gentleness.

Calvario,

May 27th, 1838.

My dear brother in Christ. May the fulness of His Holy Spirit descend upon you!

I have received your letter of the 17th of May. Try to *become a saint*, I beg of you. Where will you be better able to give yourself to God and imitate the virtues of Jesus Christ, than in the place which God has appointed for you? Above all I recommend *mildness* and *prudence*. I have too much reason to fear that you are deficient in these virtues. How much mischief is done by want of patience, want of gentleness and tranquillity! See that there be no harshness in your commands, acts or words; but calmness, kindness, tranquil and unfailing goodness. Let these virtues and any others in which you find yourself deficient, be the object of your prayers to God. You

acknowledge that you are brusque and sarcastic. Do you know how much harm is done by one fit of ill humour? I can assure you it destroys the work of years. See then what a grievous fault this is of yours. Practise *interior* mortification by denying your own will, and you will become meek and gentle,

A. R.

LXIX.

TO EMILIO BELISY AT PRIOR PARK.

On the nature of the obligation imposed by the Evangelical Counsels.

Domodossola,

July 30th, 1838.

Although I am very busy giving a retreat, I do not wish to put off answering your letter of the 18th which I received to-day, so I will give you the time usually allotted to repose.

You say that "the Counsels are always counsels for all, until God manifests His will to the individual by means of an *express* and special command, and not by way of invitation." I quite agree with you, provided we understand each other as to the meaning of an *express command*. I grant the necessity of a *clear command* from God; but I do not admit that God need send an angel or work a miracle in order to make His will known. In my opinion God can also manifest His will without external means by speaking to the mind and heart. In such a case if a man, led away by his passions is not satisfied, but stops his ears and calls that obscure which is perfectly clear, no one on earth (without a revelation) may be able to condemn him, but he will be condemned at the judgment-seat of God.

When there is a question of applying this doctrine to a particular individual, my dear Belisy, I always refrain from judging him, for the reason above mentioned, nor do I lessen my esteem of him.

If you should decide to leave the Institute, I should never condemn you, but I should exhort you to remain and urge you not to be dismayed at your faults (especially as I think it is an illusion of self-love that makes you desire to be freed from all your faults at once). Yes, I *exhort* and *advise* you to persevere in your vocation, bearing with yourself and expecting to receive even greater graces if only you are humble. I act thus in the persuasion that this is the safest course for you and the way by which you can best serve God. Certainly I am not enjoining a precept. No, I am only exhorting you to follow the counsels of Christ, for we wish to follow our Lord's dear counsels freely and with all our heart, for love and not perforce or of necessity. It is true that we are weak. But do we profess to be perfect? No, we are *trying* to become perfect. Those who are perfect have no need of the Evangelical Counsels; but we, who are imperfect, need them for they are *means* of attaining perfection. It is not the man who is perfect already, but the man who desires to become perfect, who is called to the Institute. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice for they shall have their fill." Our dear Lord has promised it. Now let us ask ourselves: do we desire to be rid of our imperfections? This is the sign by which we know that we are on the right path. But am I obliged? Why speak of *obligation* where *charity* is concerned? The whole question is whether we desire to love God *without measure*. If our heart invites us to consecrate ourselves to Him without reserve, why ask anything else? Adieu!

A. R.

LXX.

TO DON RINOLFI IN ENGLAND.

*He exhorts him not to lose courage on account of his faults,
but to confide in the arms of prayer and the cross.*

Domodossola,

August 23rd, 1838.

My dear brother,

I have received your letter. From it I gather that you have made your retreat, and, no doubt, with great fruit. We must not allow ourselves to become a prey to pusillanimity, nor expect to be free from all our defects so soon. We shall have our faults as long as we live, but all our life we must carry with us an unbounded confidence in God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and use every effort to become men of prayer and lovers of contradiction and of the cross.

Prayer and the *cross*, these are our weapons. Let us try to enlarge our hearts by great and noble thoughts in the Lord. Our defects, as I said, must keep us humble without discouraging us. "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered." We should frequently use these and similar expressions of confidence which are so common in the Psalms. Remain at your post until you are recalled by obedience; be quite sure that this is God's will and the straight road to sanctity.

All here wish to be remembered to you. Our dear Narchialli is ill, and, to speak plainly, I am afraid we shall lose him. He is an angel; but pray for him, because even for such souls as his the passage from this life to the next is fraught with dread.

May Jesus and Mary bless you!

A. R.

LXXI.

TO DON PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

He exhorts him to bear patiently with any defect he may perceive in his Superior.

Stresa,

Feast of the Holy Name, 1839.

Beloved brother and companion in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Don Luigi certainly made a mistake in writing that letter to the Bishop. Nevertheless in this as in all things else, let us be guided by the grand principle of Christian Charity, which is, to place the most favourable interpretation on the conduct of our neighbour. If this applies to all men, the rule is especially necessary in regard to superiors, for let me assure you they have an arduous duty to fulfil, and they are but men. On the one hand we should have the greatest compassion for them; and on the other we should put a kindly and charitable interpretation on their actions, giving them always the benefit of the doubt. This is what the spirit of God, a spirit of humility and union, suggests to all subjects.

Keep your gaze fixed on the most lovable Providence of our Lord and Creator; and nothing, I feel sure, will then give you alarm. You need only reflect that God intends to lead us towards perfection and to the acquisition of all virtue; it is for this reason only that He places us in difficult positions. Believe me, my dear brother (and what I say to you, I say to all), God sees perhaps that the difficulties and struggles which now interfere with your devotion and recollection are the means of your gaining greater merit than you would gain by leading the peaceful life of anchorites, with no opportunity of using all your

activities and powers in fighting for the cause of God. "None shall be crowned except he strive lawfully." Our Institute has need of men ready for war. God will not fail us, we may be quite sure of that: and "if God be for us who will be against us?" May the name of our Jesus be your strength and your solace.

A. R.

LXXII.

TO DON ANGELO RINOLFI IN ENGLAND.

He approves and blesses his good desires.

Stresa,

January 20th, 1839.

My beloved Angelo and dear companion in the Divine service,

I am overjoyed by the assurances you give me of unshaken firmness in your vocation to our Institute. God will crown your manly perseverance. Those who think they have come to the Institute to enjoy repose are certainly deceiving themselves. We are soldiers. The Institute is a battlefield; its noble aim is to acquire solid and manly virtue and to imitate Him who never rested till He expired on the cross. Therefore "fear not little flock, I have overcome the world." How sweet and encouraging are the words of our Captain! Who would be so base as to desert from His standard?

A. R.

LXXIII.

TO DON BELISY IN ENGLAND.

On the manner of writing to Superiors.

Stresa,

January 20th, 1839.

My beloved companion in the love and service of Jesus,

I am always pleased with your letters, especially when they are as full of information as the last two have been. You must not expect me to answer point by point; this would not be necessary and I am sure you will not require it. Rest assured, however, that I endeavour, to the best of my ability, to profit by all the information I receive, reflecting on it carefully and in the presence of God. In your present circumstances you must keep all united together *in the Lord*, and rally round Don Pagani, who will attend to all that your Superior, during his absence, is unable to do. I beg you all to cultivate charity and manly and solid virtue that you may come forth victorious from trial and conflict, for God certainly will not fail to help you if you trust in Him and call upon Him in all humility. You will then be like the man, just and truly wise, of whom the Scripture says, "he will try the good and evil that is in men."

You say well at the end of your letter that it is hard to combine humility and religious submission with long and circumstantial statements. The imagination is easily aroused, and this faculty often ministers to the passions and especially to self-love. It often robs us of that peace wherein humility of heart and simple obedience, the virtues most dear to God, find a home. Therefore commend yourself to the protection of God, when you have to send these statements; and make frequent interior acts of humility, resignation and mortification, lest that poverty of heart, which is the first of the Beatitudes, should suffer. Adieu.

A. R.

LXXIV.

TO THE SAME IN ENGLAND.

On the relative importance of primary and secondary reasons.

Stresa,

February 22nd, 1839.

My opinion is that you should take the vows, for I am fully convinced that by so doing you will please God. In this heart-felt persuasion I have inserted your name in the Decree I am sending your Superior, our dear Don Luigi, which contains the list of those who are to take the vows.

The subtlety of your mind and your imagination above all are your principal enemies, as you yourself know. Endeavour to subdue them by means of prayer and generous and repeated acts of the will. These acts of the will, together with frequent protestations and heart-felt longings, have great efficacy in obtaining the grace and fortitude which we need at every moment in this our earthly pilgrimage.

I do not blame you for *reasoning*, but I will remark that some reasons are *primary* and absolute, whilst others are *secondary* and are true only relatively and in part. Now we should be guided in all our opinions and actions by the primary reasons, which are few, simple, sublime and of universal application, the source of constancy and peace; not by secondary reasons, which belong to a lower and narrower sphere. These secondary reasons offer us no practical guidance, they are never exhausted for they are endless, and consequently give rise to continual disquietude. This doctrine is not only logical but sacred. Jesus Christ taught His disciples to take heed of none save the great and primary reasons of which I am speaking; from them

are derived the simplicity, constancy and magnanimity displayed in the lives of the Saints. The following are some of the reasons which have weight enough to crush innumerable secondary, minute and paltry reasons.

1st. There is a most loving Providence which directs and disposes of all things. Therefore I must be content with everything that does not depend on me. I must hold it for certain that even what seems to me ill-regulated is the best means of securing my sanctification and eternal happiness if I profit by it.

2nd. Since God is infinitely good, I must trust in Him and throw myself on His mercy, even though I be wicked, weak, and infirm. I must do my very utmost (but without anxiety and disquietude) to overcome myself and to do things perfectly; and whether I succeed or not I must consider my very efforts, my very desires, as His gift and a pledge of His assistance. Good desires incessantly renewed in the heart cannot be in vain, and therefore a saint is indicated in Holy Scripture by the simple words, "a man of desires."

3rd. I must follow with docility the authority of the Church and the Sovereign Pontiffs, as also the sentiments and so to speak, the instinct of the Saints.

4th. The sentiment of the Saints and the authority of the Church tell me that obedience to religious superiors is a safe road to salvation and perfection. I perceive that God makes you feel this truth in your inmost soul. What does it matter to me if my superiors make mistakes? I am right in obeying. Besides, if superiors err, like men as they are, God who permits them to be mistaken does not err, and I am certain that He permits it for my greater good. Superiors are merely instruments in the hands of God. That command which was a mistake according to some lower, secondary reason, is not a mistake judged by the light of a sublime and primary reason. The primary reason brings tranquillity to my soul. It inspires me with love and sympathy towards my superiors; it makes obedience delightful and meritorious in those very cases

in which secondary reasons darken my mind, disturb and embitter my spirit, render me unloving to superiors, reluctant to obey and even vacillating in my vocation. Away then with these secondary reasons! May they disappear as clouds before the sun! We must not argue with them, but stifle them as soon as they present themselves, annihilate them without mercy.

5th.—I should hold all in great esteem, especially my brothers and superiors. I must put the best construction upon everything, placing my talents at the disposal of my charity. On the other hand, I should be extremely distrustful of myself, and of my own opinions, and believe myself to be inferior to all in point of virtue.

6th.—If I perform a good and generous act I am sure that I shall never have cause to regret it, I am certain that its effects will be to my advantage; and if (as far as my inconstancy permits) I throw myself upon the mercy of God, I am certain that He will not let me fall but will cherish me with a Father's love.

These and other lofty and *primary reasons* form the basis of our Institute. They afford great peace of heart and great encouragement to the weak and sinful. I am sure that in your inmost heart these reasons are supreme; but it seems to me that they have not yet destroyed and annihilated the secondary reasons. Your mind and imagination seem to be always at work finding out these petty reasons. Of these there is in reality no end; they make a man loquacious and involve him in disputes which are useless and by no means edifying. Put them away altogether. Let the primary and Divine reasons reign in your soul. It is in this sense that I exhort you to make war upon your reason by blind submission to authority and obedience, resting on the assurance that "the obedient man shall speak of victories." It is in this sense we must understand the words of the Saints and spiritual writers when they bid us renounce our will and judgment: a lofty and sublime doctrine, the unfailing source of sanctity. What can be more desirable than to be sure of reaching the haven

though we may not be sure of our course and may be ignorant of the dangers to be encountered? O dear and holy Faith, though I be blindfold I cling to thee and love thee with all my heart. "The just man lives by faith."

As for the way in which the government of the Institute has been conducted up to the present moment, believe me, dear brother, that you cannot safely form an opinion on the subject, since you are not acquainted with all the circumstances. I have many times thought over what has taken place, and I believe that in substance the will of God has been done, that we have acted to the best of our knowledge and ability, and that God has marvellously accomplished the rest.

With regard to mortifications, I must correct an erroneous opinion you have formed. You say that when a practice is established as belonging to our common life, one is bound to conform to the general custom of the brothers, in order not to give scandal. If it is merely a question of mortification, I do not agree with you. The Institute prizes humility above all things; and if a brother who is unable to practise some mortification, accepts the humiliation which comes to him in consequence and derives spiritual profit therefrom, by humbling himself and acknowledging his infirmity, he thereby practises virtue in a way most characteristic of the Institute. But will the others take scandal? They should not. I hope that in course of time we shall see all the members of the Institute entertaining the greatest horror of judging their brothers, holding all in the highest esteem, and reflecting that those who do not practise our ordinary mortifications may yet possess inestimable treasures of virtue and be guided by good and even supernatural reasons in omitting these particular acts. To lose our esteem for our brethren on account of such trifles is simply an effect of ignorance. I desire that all our brothers should be well instructed on this point and learn to be very charitable at heart, and I value this disposition even more than uniformity of common life, though this also I desire to

see as far as it is possible. At the same time I wish all to appreciate the importance of penance and to prefer the penitential practices performed by the Community to all private penances, for this is in accordance with the spirit of the Church and of Jesus Christ and His Saints and with the aim of our Institute.

As regards opinions, the Institute allows perfect freedom to its members, according to the grand rule of St. Augustine: "in necessary things unity, in doubtful things liberty, in all things charity." As for political opinions I am sure you will hold to the doctrines set forth by the Holy Father in the Encyclicals condemning the opinions of the Abbé Lamennais. You may have read the letter I wrote to this priest, it has been translated into French. Adherence to the teaching of the Encyclical is a thing necessary: *in necessary things unity*. As to the rest, you are free; but I am pleased at your telling me that you have not expressed an opinion on the subject, for it is a most difficult and delicate matter, and it would be dangerous to form an opinion upon it without having studied it under every aspect. I should like you to read my work, "Society and its Scope," in which I have endeavoured to explain some important ideas closely connected with the question.

This letter is already long, however, and I have no time for more. I think I have practically touched upon the principal things you mentioned. Courage then, liberty of conscience, generous and irrevocable resolution! May God come to your aid and make you his own!

A. R.

LXXV.

TO FATHER FURLONG IN ENGLAND.

He congratulates him on his fervour.

Stresa,

May 2nd, 1839.

I was filled with joy in the Lord on receiving your letter of the 17th of April, because it tells me of the light which God gives you and the desire He puts into your heart of being all His and of despising the vile things of earth. Such indeed is the end proposed by the lowly Institute to which God calls you, and in which I firmly trust the Lord will give you more and more grace and strength, whereby you may perfect the sacrifice of self which renders a man like to our Crucified Lord. Faith in Divine Providence, universal charity, indifference to all offices, fortitude in all tribulations, obedience unto death; these are our riches; these the only treasures desirable, which we must strive to acquire in the closest union of heart and will, and with humble prayer to our heavenly Father. This is the substance of all our rules, of our Institute itself. The consequences are incalculable, but these we need not even think about, leaving them in our Father's hands, satisfied with knowing that they will be fraught with happiness for us. "All things work together unto good to them that love God." Be careful to preserve the great grace you have received. Your ardour and generosity should be increased by remembering that you are the first called to the Institute in England, so that you must be a cornerstone of the edifice in your country. Stone is hard and durable; it resists blows. You, too, will require the valour and the constancy which, with the arms of faith

and prayer, with the balm of charity and the light of prudence, will triumph in the conflict and heal the wounds inflicted by our adversaries.

I hear there is some likelihood of your being joined by some English companions. May God do what is for His greater glory! Pray for me. I embrace you with affection and respect.

A. R.

LXXVI.

TO BROTHER PIETRO ZENCHER IN ENGLAND.

He exhorts him to correspond with the grace of the vows.

Stresa,

May 2nd, 1839.

My dear Pietro,

A word to you also. Now that you are bound with the chains of love, I trust that you will be very happy and that you will rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom also you have Mary for your Lady, and that you will love them both with all your heart. Pray that you may receive this grace and ask it also for me, your unworthy Father. Our Lord, however, does not look at our merits, but produces merits where there are none and makes water gush forth from the rock. Pray for me, dear Pietro, the rock that is writing to you. I have received your last letter, for which I thank you. If you become ever more and more humble, obedient and cheerful in your labour and troubles you will have a greater reward. Have no doubts.

A. R.

LXXVII.

TO DON PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

He nominates him Superior of the English Mission.

Stresa,

May 21st, 1839.

I have received the account of your profession and read it with great spiritual joy. I am sending it to Calvario that the community there may share our consolation.

The enclosed contains your nomination to the Superiorship of our dear Brothers, Don Luigi having completed the term of three years.

I advise you in entering upon the office of Superior to pray earnestly to the Holy Spirit and to study beforehand as is prescribed, all the rules and ordinances which we must henceforth begin to put in practice. The Mosaic legislation could not be observed at the outset by the Hebrews, and the same is the case with all legislation. Moses himself did not live to see it carried out, for he died before the people entered the Promised Land. Shortly before his death he said to the Israelites: "You shall not do there the things we do here this day, every man that which seemeth good to himself. For until this present time you are not come to rest and to the possession which the Lord your God will give you." (Deut. xii.) God Himself did not require more from the Hebrews, and in the same way we could not expect more in our Institute. However, now that we have received the approbation of the Holy See, we may also say that we have entered into the Promised Land, and therefore we must begin to observe our laws, not only in their spirit, but as far as possible in the letter also.

I bless you, dear brother, and all the others, especially the two novice-priests, and I wish to all charity and sanctity without measure. Adieu.

A. R.

LXXVIII.

TO DON GENTILI IN ENGLAND.

On his retiring from the office of Superior of the English Mission.

Stresa,

May 22nd, 1839.

My dear brother and friend in our Lord Jesus Christ and His consoling Spirit,

As the Saints received the office of Superior unwillingly and with tears, so they accepted their release with great joy, counting their exemption as a signal grace. I expect you to do the same and that all our brothers will never wish to be Superiors but will rather desire to give an example of the two evangelical virtues, humility and obedience, by remaining in subjection. I had the consolation of seeing the Rector of the Sacro Monte act thus when I relieved him from office at the end of his three years. I am sure my dear Don Luigi will act in the same spirit. But you must not think this a sign that I am displeased with you. No, certainly not; on the contrary I am very well pleased, and I attribute to your zeal and labour, under God, much of the good that has been accomplished. If you have sometimes acted imprudently, I know well that everyone must learn by degrees, and that God permits mistakes for the salutary humiliation of His dear friends and in order to deliver them from all presumption. Hence their very errors result in good, as you yourself have found by experience and told me in your letters. Now, you must give an example to all of respect and docility to the new Superior, and thank our Lord for the opportunity of so doing. As soon as you can, write and tell me, for my consolation, what your feelings on the subject are. Pray and get prayers for your father in Christ,

LXXIX.

TO DON PAOLI AT ROVERETO.

He invites him to enter the Institute without delay.

Stresa,

June 1st, 1839.

My dear brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,

I rejoice to hear that the grace of God strengthens and confirms you in your holy vocation. I say the grace of God, because your resolution can come from no other source, since it is a question of giving yourself to God for time and for eternity, of consecrating to His glory all your strength, your time, your own will, all that you have and are: this at least is what our little Institute proposes to do. I hope also to see you amongst us before long, for the grace of the Holy Spirit brooks not long delays. *Nescit tarda molimina Spiritus Sancti gratia.*

Within a few days we shall meet. In all probability I shall return to these dear brethren of election towards the end of the month. Could you not accompany me? Make your arrangements so that you may be able to do so. "My son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." Adieu!

A. R.

LXXX.

TO METILDE STEDILE, A NOVICE AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He exhorts her to detach herself from all things and to seek God alone.

Stresa,

July 23rd, 1839.

My dear daughter,

I was very glad to hear that you are *perfectly happy in every way*. Seek God alone and detach yourself from all the things of this world, and you will find yourself growing in fortitude, whereby you will overcome all temptations. The devil tempts us only because we give him the chance by our attachment to earthly things. If we were not attached to anything but God, we should rejoice in the liberty of the children of God and no temptation would molest us. But it is enough that we be held by a single thread to this world, to prevent us from winging our flight on high. You must reflect often that God who has given you grace to forsake the world and called you to His special service in the person of your neighbour, expects great things of you and will exact a generous return. Be generous therefore! It is by prayer that you will obtain generosity, for prayer does everything. But you must ask expressly for the graces of which you feel the need. Often ask Jesus, your Spouse, to let you be crucified with Him to the world and yourself, and to live only in Him and for Him. I shall not fail to beseech Him to grant you this great grace. Do you pray likewise unceasingly for me. Cherish a great love and esteem for your holy Institute, your holy Rules, your companions and your superiors.

Adieu! Your father in Christ,

A. R.

LXXXI.

TO DON MARTIN AT MOUTIERS.

*He bids him return to S. Michele, and live under the Rules
of the Institute.*

Leghorn,

August 12th, 1839.

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

I cannot concede what you ask for in your letter of the 2nd inst. On the contrary I wish you to return to the House at S. Michele as soon as possible. I am sure that you desire to do the will of God, and you are too well instructed not to know that God's will is found only in obedience, and that apart from this there is no solid virtue but only delusion and self-love. You know how eager you should be to work in harmony with the Institute of which you are a member and to promote its welfare. This is what God requires of you, but for this purpose you must live in one of the houses of the Institute with the companions appointed you by Providence and you must overcome and deny yourself in those inclinations, which, though they appear to be good, might interfere with the one object you should set before you. While you remain alone and isolated, you will never learn to love your Institute and your companions. You will be like a soldier who leaves the ranks. You will never learn to subdue your own spirit, or imitate Jesus Christ whose doctrine is comprised in those words: "If any man will come after me let him deny himself."

You say that the want of active life exposes you to temptations. But the most dangerous temptation is that which draws you to an active life not assigned to you by

obedience. Moreover, it is certain that the man who obeys for duty's sake and remains firm in his vocation, is protected by God, who will not suffer him to be tempted beyond his strength. Do not these temptations arise from desiring what you should not desire, or from not clinging to obedience and your vocation with your whole soul as you should? If they are entirely involuntary they should be accepted like the other tribulations sent by God, and you should thank God for them, because the greater the temptation, the greater is the merit and its reward.

Have confidence in Jesus Christ, have confidence in obedience and in your vocation to which God attaches His graces, and do not let yourself be distracted by any other reflection or any other desire, which cannot come from God. God cannot contradict Himself; what does not come from Him can only be a delusion of self-love and of the devil who at times transforms himself into an angel of light. A good meditation on the subject of your duties, and fervent prayer will give you the victory. I have no doubt you will understand that it is for you to console and re-assure me. Pray also for me.

A. R.

LXXXII.

TO CECILIA DELEANI, SISTER OF PROVIDENCE.

He exhorts her to correspond with the grace of her vocation.

Stresa,

October 6th, 1839.

My dear daughter in Christ,

Set great value on your vocation, and the Lord will be with you and will perhaps make use of you to do much good to your neighbour, for He delights to make the most wretched instruments, such as we are, His poor creatures, serviceable for His purpose. Let it be your aim to follow your Creator and Redeemer in all simplicity, as a lamb that will follow anyone who offers it salt. Your Spouse has the salt of wisdom; care for nothing else, neither for consolations nor for tribulations. When all goes well, say to yourself: "the cross will come soon." When everything seems to go wrong, say: "My Lord will console me ere long." Apply yourself to study with all diligence, that you may be the better able to serve Jesus Christ in the children and the poor. Adieu.

Your father in Christ,

A. R.

LXXXIII.

TO MARIA VERONICA, SISTER OF PROVIDENCE AT
LOCARNO.

Advice on the government of her companions.

Stresa,

October 13th, 1839.

My dear daughter in Christ,

Charity and the good to be obtained are the considerations that should direct a Superior in all her relations with the Sisters. Hence it is impossible to lay down a general rule on the point you mention. Sometimes it will be best for you to wait till those who are perturbed or afflicted tell you their troubles of their own accord. Sometimes it would be well to question them, inviting them affectionately to give you their confidence. It is holy discretion and spiritual prudence that must guide us in these matters. We must try to act with an upright intention, free from self-love and purely out of zeal for the spiritual welfare of our companions; and we must pray to God for the light needed in particular cases. Above all, endeavour to inspire your companions with full confidence in you, and to this end you must treat them with all kindness and gentleness. Pray for me, as I on my part pray God to bless you!

A. R.

LXXXIV.

TO ARNOLDO FEHR AT CALVARIO.

He exhorts him to profit by the School of the Novitiate.

Stresa,

November 7th, 1839.

It is evident from your letters that you long ardently to give yourself entirely to God. How delightful and happy is this service, in comparison with which the diadems and thrones of this world are as filth and refuse! I hold for certain that the God of all love who has drawn you out of darkness into light, who has inspired you with these holy desires and has even granted you admittance into His own dwelling where you may live a life of love with Him and die of love for Him, will perfect by His grace the glorious work He has begun. But with our boundless confidence in His infinite goodness we must unite an extreme distrust of our own weakness and misery. Let us be quite sure that our object is not to admire the beauty of virtue from afar but really to practise it, to clothe ourselves in virtue as with a garment. Ah! This indeed seems hard to poor human nature! But it is in this very difficulty, which we shall overcome by faith and perseverance or rather which God dwelling in our hearts will overcome, that the glory consists of which St. Paul says: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." You will give me great pleasure if after a time you write and give me some particulars about your occupations in the Novitiate, about the great work you have in hand, a work hidden from the eyes of the world, but in which you aim at nothing less than the weaning of your soul from all things, even from life and from self. O blessed poverty of spirit! Truly

“blessed are the poor,” nay “blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord.” This most desirable state wherein we despoil ourselves of the natural man, cannot be reached without passing through the fire of temptation. But perhaps God has not yet used this method with you. Cherish therefore a most ardent fervour in simplicity and peace, but without neglecting to make ready for the conflict.

Pray for your affectionate but most unworthy father,
A. R.

LXXXV.

TO METILDE STEDILE, A NOVICE AT DOMODOSSOLA.

*He exhorts her to prove her attachment to her vocation by zeal
in the education of children.*

Stresa,

Christmas Day, 1839.

My dear daughter,

I rejoice to hear that God gives you more and more light to know and value the inestimable grace He has bestowed on you by choosing you for His spouse, and placing you in a state where you are wholly employed in loving Him and serving Him in your neighbour. Jesus Christ has said: “Whatsoever ye have done to one of these little ones, ye have done it to me.” These *little ones of Christ* are for you the children whose education will be entrusted to you in due time. What a noble office God has assigned to you! He who does not appreciate it does not love God; he who has no zeal for his neighbour’s soul does not love Jesus Christ. What kind of *love* would it be that would be unwilling to do anything for the Spouse? Our souls must be spouses of Christ in very deed, not in word. Therefore the proof of your love

for your Spouse will be the cheerful endurance of the toils and trials to be undergone in His service, that is in the service of our neighbour, in the care of little children. Be of good courage! This is Christmas Day. May the Holy Child Jesus take possession of your soul for all eternity! Adieu!

A. R.

LXXXVI.

TO TERESA ALVAZZI, SISTER OF PROVIDENCE,
AT INTRAGNA.

Words of encouragement.

December 29th, 1839.

My daughter in Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

Be of good heart! Woman of little faith, do you not know that God is with you and that His holy Angel is keeping you in all your ways?

Your strength and consolation must be found in Jesus whom you serve and whose spouse you are, and in Mary, His and your most loving Mother. God has permitted that you should be in a place where you have fewer spiritual advantages, in order to see whether you love Him and whether you can be content to abide with Him alone without the intervention of creatures.

Make therefore a worthy return of love. Christ would fain see all His spouses full of joy and confidence in Him alone. Pray and get others to pray for me. Adieu!

A. R.

LXXXVII.

TO DON MARTIN AT S. MICHELE.

He shows that a true religious, especially in the Institute, must be content to live in any place assigned to him by obedience.

Stresa,

January 8th, 1840.

My dear father and brother in Christ,

Your letter of the 3rd inst. was a sad surprise. You hesitate as to living in Italy. But would it not be contrary to the vow of obedience to choose one's own residence? The vow of *indifference to any place*, as clearly stated in our Rules is a special feature of the Institute. You must have read the *Memorial of the First Probation* and all the rules which expressly set forth these things. Remember that the sacrifice which we must make to the Lord, and which we have made by our holy vows, must resemble that of Jesus Christ, our Master and our Model. Did Jesus Christ Crucified, think you, ever say to His Heavenly Father: "I do not want to stop in Judea, because I feel melancholy or because I expose myself to danger of death?" No, He was "obedient even unto death." And take notice that the Holy Fathers, and in particular St. Basil and St. Thomas, declare that religious obedience is binding even to death. It is idle to say: I did not mean to incur this obligation when I took the vow. That would be begging the question, when you have had so many instructions on the Rules and every opportunity for understanding the force of the vows.

Ah, do not be so niggardly with our Lord, do not take a step which might rob you of peace of conscience in the

hour of death. It is true that you might perhaps find friends and even theologians to favour your imperfections and your passions; but certain counsels, based on subtleties, are worth little at the judgment seat of God. Allow me to speak my mind freely to you. You will never be at rest until your sacrifice of self to God is *entire* and *perfect*: and your sacrifice will not be entire and perfect unless you generously sever all the bonds that attach you to self and to the things of this world, and cling to God alone. "*My God and my all*" must be your motto and the motto of us all. When you place yourself in God's hands (and you have done so by your holy vows as understood in our Institute) you must remain constant and at peace in those hands *in life and in death*. God most certainly does not forsake one who puts entire confidence in Him and accepts good and evil at His hands, through the instrumentality of Superiors. This abandonment of self to the Providence of God is essential in our Institute; without it there can be no genuine sacrifice, no true imitation of Jesus Christ. He who maintains a different doctrine reasons humanly and therefore deceives himself. If God sees it is for the good, not of your body, but of your soul that you should lead an active life, He will so dispose external circumstances as to bring this about. If this is not for the good of your soul, He will permit the contrary; He may even allow you to be attacked by some malady of the nerves for "power is made perfect in infirmity." If you remain firm in your vocation under the trials that God sends you (which are never beyond our strength provided we have recourse to prayer), you will become holy and pleasing in the sight of God, for "the obedient man will speak of victories." God knows what need you have of an active life. If such a life is really necessary for the welfare of the soul rather than for the body, God will certainly provide for a faithful servant, but not for one who is unfaithful. There is also great danger of the imagination playing a part in these matters: it often deceives us and we should fight against it valiantly, opposing thereunto the shield of faith.

But the imagination would have no power over us if we were not attached to self, to our native place, friends, comfort and temporal substance. Let us, therefore, burst these bonds violently asunder, and the imagination will cease to work. Then we shall be able to sing: "The snare is broken and we are delivered."

The devil cheats us by the attractiveness of an apostolic life. But can there be any apostolic life without *solid* virtue, without obedience and poverty? The Apostles were *sent* to preach, but how can a religious exercise any apostolate who has received no mission from his Superiors, and who can only say: I want to go about preaching because a quiet life is bad for my nerves? How can a man be an apostle if he will not leave his boat and his nets and all that he has? St. Paul trembled lest perhaps while he preached to others he should himself become a castaway. We learn from this that apostolic labours are to be undertaken, not for the sake of natural inclination or for any pleasure or consolation of our own, but simply because God wills it, God sends us. Therefore if your Superiors send you, you do well to hearken to them and to obey, for "he that heareth you, heareth me." But if you want to go of your own accord or try to induce others to send you, you will have to render an account to God, and the judgment passed on you would be inexorable: "I did not send them and yet they ran." Ah, let us fear and tremble when we undertake the great work of instructing others, as St. Augustine and all the Saints trembled; and let us desire rather to *prepare* ourselves for the apostolic ministry than actually to undertake it. Our chief thought should be to effect our own conversion and thus become fit instruments for the conversion of others in God's own time and way. If we first of all subdue ourselves, overcome temptation and render ourselves perfect in obedience and self-denial, then we shall be serviceable instruments in God's hands and we may hope that He will *perhaps* make use of us to do some good work. But as long as we are so imperfect, so full of self-will, so much

attached to our own opinions, so unmortified, we have but too much reason to distrust ourselves. He alone will be a true apostle, who waits to receive the heavenly mission as Jesus Christ waited for the space of thirty years in the obscurity of the hidden life. This is genuine and unmistakeable virtue, because it does not flatter self-love. This is the virtue which we Priests of the Institute of Charity have resolved to practise.

Courage then, dear brother in our Lord. Perish everything, life and riches, our tastes and personal opinions, provided only we retain virtue, the true evangelical and apostolic virtue which is essential to our profession. Let us give up every thought and desire save that of becoming *true members of the Institute of Charity*. Let this one thought engross your mind more than it has done hitherto. A member of the Institute of Charity is content in every place, in every grade, in every office, for he seeks God alone. He is detached from all things. Our poverty must be complete, absolute, like that of Jesus Christ on the cross. When you are utterly despoiled of all temporal goods, the power of God's grace will be made manifest; strengthened and illumined by God you will never tire of blessing His holy Name for the great grace He has bestowed on you. I will pray to God for you, unworthy as I am, and I hope that the next letter will restore to me the consolation of which your last deprived me, by reason of the interest I must needs take in the welfare of your soul.

Your servant and brother in Christ,

A. R.

LXXXVIII.

TO DON PUECHER AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He desires that the Lay Brothers should unite the love of labour with piety.

Stresa,

January 15th, 1840.

I am not satisfied about the novitiate of the lay brothers. Piety should be ardent, *ignita*, but it must also be *solid*, else it will be a mere delusion. I am very much afraid that you are not laying the axe to the root. Do not allow the brothers to practise *arbitrary devotions* of their own choosing, except ejaculatory prayers said during the course of the day. All other prayers, public and private, should be sanctioned by the Superior. Otherwise a brother will foolishly burden himself with prayers, which will become a necessity to him; then he will be disquieted if unable to say them, or else be dejected and resentful towards those who interfere with his devotions. Many other spiritual evils may spring from the same source. The chief characteristic of our lay-brothers should be the *love of labour* and union with God in the midst of their toils. They should be all on fire with divine love, but the fire must be fed chiefly by the thought and intention of *labouring* and suffering for God. The man who cannot be fervent when at his work will never be a good lay-brother according to the spirit of the Institute.

A. R.

LXXXIX.

TO ARNOLDO FEHR AT CALVARIO.

He approves of the vow he asks to make.

Stresa,

February 15th, 1840.

I was consoled to hear of the vow of chastity you have offered to the Immaculate Queen of Virgins, and I am pleased also at your request to be allowed to take the vow of obedience for a time. This most excellent virtue contains in itself all other virtues, and it is a safe guide and a lamp to the feet of those who place all their happiness in doing the will of their Lord and Creator. I consent most willingly to your eager desire. Accomplish by all means your sacrifice of self in imitation of Jesus Christ, who became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." I have no doubt that the mercy of God which aids and follows you, will also crown His work in you by rendering you a worthy disciple of the Redeemer, who teaches us from the Cross. It is to this end that He has received you into His school on Calvary. With regard to the best way of binding yourself more closely to our Lord and to His holy service by this additional vow, allow yourself to be guided by Father Master, who will have light to know the gift of Christ that is in you and to determine what is best for you. Finally, whatever be decided upon, I do not doubt that you will not rest there, but will long for all that is perfect in God's service and generous in His love. Our confidence in our Divine Leader must be without bounds. This confidence, blended with distrust of self, best prepares the soul to love God and to do great things for Him. Pray for me.

A. R.

XC.

TO PIETRO ZENCHER IN ENGLAND.

On the love of poverty.

Stresa,

April 19th, 1840.

A word from the heart to you also, dear Pietro. Our poverty requires that no one should receive even a thread without permission; but the Superior may in this matter grant a more or less ample permission, accompanied by such instructions as he thinks fit. Have recourse then to your Superior and listen to the voice of God speaking through him. Continue to love and serve this good God. Love Him in yourself, in your superiors, in your brothers, in your neighbour, in all creatures. You know that of all these creatures Our Lady is the noblest, hence you can easily understand how you must love and praise your Creator for what He has accomplished in Mary. Why do I say *you* as though you alone were bound to honour her? This is not what I mean for I wish to love her myself, I desire to see her loved by us all, within the Institute and without, in heaven and on earth, so that all the universe may be filled with love, and that all be united in love in the Father and the Son, to whom be all glory and felicity for ever and ever.

A. R.

XCI.

TO DON PAGANI AT PRIOR PARK.

Reply to a question on the nature of zeal.

Stresa,

May 5th, 1840.

I thank God for the good retreat you have made and for the increased light you have received. May God give you grace, as I trust He will, to fulfil the resolutions you have made! I will now answer your question.

The words, *let his zeal be directed solely to the increase of the Church*, certainly bear the sense you give them. Moreover, they demonstrate that our zeal for the Institute should be subordinate to the welfare of the Church and always under this condition, that if God in His inscrutable judgments and unfathomable wisdom should deem the Institute or its progress to be no longer useful for the *total good* of the Church, we should conform our judgment to His. Our zeal therefore must be conditional, not absolute. We may not arrogate to ourselves the right to decide absolutely what may or may not be advantageous to the Church as a whole: this decision is above our capacity and belongs only to God and the Church herself.

To come now to our dear Don Luigi. As there cannot be two superiors in England he will be subject to you. Before starting for his mission, he will, by his own desire, make his retreat under you at Prior Park. You will then tell him frankly what failings you have noticed in him; he is most anxious to fight against them, with God's assistance. You will also give him such instructions as you think necessary, and make arrangements for maintaining

relations with him. Your communications must be as frequent as possible, and always in the closest intimacy of hearts.

I embrace and bless you all in the charity of our Lord, to whom be praise and thanksgiving for all ages.

A. R.

XCII.

TO DON GAGLIARDI AT AGRANO.

Advice to a postulant.

Stresa,

December 24th, 1840.

I think it will be better to say nothing to your parishioners before leaving of the resolution you have taken and to wait also till you are at Calvario to tell your relatives. Hasten, as soon as you are free, to the spot where our Crucified Lord awaits you that you may rest with Him on the cross. Fly with the wings of a dove, the gold and silver wings of the love of God and your neighbour. Bring with you a great heart full of holy desires, and first and foremost the desire of becoming deeply versed in *self-contempt*. This is the very foundation of that Society to which God has called you, and is now leading you by means of His adorable providence. Let your sacrifice be complete; give all to God so as to retain nothing of what you give or rather restore to Him. I embrace you in the loving Heart of our God, who became a little Babe for our example.

A. R.

XCIII.

TO TERESA ALVAZZI, SISTER OF PROVIDENCE AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

*He answers the question whether we may ask others to pray
for our restoration to health.*

Stresa,

New Year's Day, 1841.

My dear daughter in Christ,

You ask me whether it is right to ask others to pray for your restoration to health. I reply that it is always an act of charity to pray even for the temporal welfare of our brethren in Christ, provided we ask for temporal blessings as subservient to the good of their souls and in a spirit of submission to the will of God. A Superior, therefore, always does well to recommend the sick to the prayers of the Community, not so much that God may cure them, as that He may enrich them with His grace and with every blessing for soul and body, as He sees fit.

As to getting prayers for oneself, that is not quite perfect. It is better to pray and ask others to pray that God may grant us patience and all other virtues and to love the cross of Christ, our treasure. Nevertheless in those moments in which we feel our own weakness most keenly, we may cry out to God for succour and for mercy and say to Him with confidence: "If it be possible, O Father, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou willest." Let us learn to suffer gladly, taking every thing tranquilly and gratefully from the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time we should use such precautions as we can, so as not to aggravate without necessity the bodily ailments that God sends us.

May God bless you abundantly in this New Year, replenishing you all with light, fervour and fortitude wherewith to serve Him faithfully unto death.

A. R.

XCIV.

TO SISTER MARIA FELICE AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He exhorts her to fervour on the occasion of the New Year.

Stresa,

New Year's Day, 1841.

Here is a new year, my dear daughter ; our Lord calls us to begin a new life. Let us cast away all the weakness and infidelity of the past, and give ourselves to His dear service with all our strength, protesting that, with the aid of His holy grace, we will never lose courage or listen to the suggestions of the enemy, but go straight on, in the path of our religious vocation, which will lead us direct to our Father's home. My daughter, God desires great things from you. He expects fortitude and constancy, not weakness and cowardice. He wants you to be humble and obedient, mortified, resigned and patient, full of zeal for the salvation of the souls in whose service you are employed, ready to labour for them all your life long, full of charity for your sisters and companions in God's service, full of esteem and love for your holy vocation, which is worth far more than this mortal life. God will not fail you. Hope in Him ; and do not lose heart if you sometimes fall, but rise forthwith with new courage and trust in His goodness and mercy. This is the grace I wish and pray that you may receive in this new year and the years to come: this is the virtue required of you by your holy vocation. Pray also that I may receive the same grace.

A. R.

XCV.

TO SISTER N. N.

He suggests some means of obtaining peace of soul.

Stresa,

January 22nd, 1841.

My dear daughter in Christ,

I understand from your letter that you are much disturbed by fears of being unfaithful to your religious duties to the extent of being tempted against your vocation, or placing the salvation of your soul in danger. It is necessary to discover the origin of such fears, enquiring with sincere humility whether they may not come from some defect or interior failing not yet recognized, and in this case one must overcome the enemy by *doing violence to oneself*. As a rule the vices which lurk within our souls and corrupt them, as the worm eats away the wood, are those which spring from self-love. If you wish me to help you, my advice is that you begin by offering humble and earnest prayer to God, entreating Him to give you light to know the most hidden sources of evil in your heart, to the end that you may weep over them without discouragement and confess them honestly and bravely. Next, in perfect tranquillity and calm, put the following questions to yourself: 1st: Am I *simple* in all my thought, words and actions, or am I deficient in sincerity?—This is a very important point, my dear daughter, and necessary for obtaining an abundance of the grace of God. 2nd: Am I *poor in spirit*, that is ready to take the lowest place, to be subject to each and all of my companions, to receive neither honour, nor esteem, nor temporal recompense for all that I do? Do I imitate the gentleness of Jesus Christ in bearing with humble joy all that is contrary to

my self-love? Do I ponder frequently and carry written in my heart those divine words of His: "If anyone will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me?" 3rd: Do I endeavour to carry out the designs and wishes of my immediate Superior, to lighten her burden and comfort her by my charity, humility, submissiveness, obedience and kindness? Do I take in good part all that she says and does, and show her my confidence, gratitude and attachment as a good and true religious should? 4th: Do I maintain my own spirit in peace and tranquillity, in the mildness and sweetness of charity? Or do I get angry and perturbed, do I speak and act passionately? Is my judgment swayed by my feelings? Do I exaggerate?

My dear daughter, all our good consists in correcting and overcoming ourselves, in doing violence to ourselves. The more we purify our souls the happier we shall be, and the greater grace will God bestow on us. Let us be just. If we condemn ourselves, then will God look upon us with eyes of mercy. Do not lose heart; ask incessantly for the gifts of *fortitude* and *simplicity*. We want fortitude to discover our faults without losing heart, and to fight against them with confidence in the grace of God. Courage then! No one can be crowned who does not fight. If you fight *against yourself* you will conquer by the power of Jesus Christ, and you will be crowned. Pray for your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

XCVI.

TO DON GENTILI AT GRACEDIEU.

*He desires that persuasion alone should be employed
in the conversion of heretics.*

Stresa,

Feast of the Purification, 1841.

My dearest brother in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be all honour and glory.

I have received your report and have not failed to thank God, and to get others to do the same, for the Protestants who have returned to their mother the Church. May God deign to make use of you to bring the crowd gathered on the highway into His banqueting hall! Even more earnestly do I desire that all who come in be clad in the wedding garment; I desire that all whom, by God's favour, you receive be well instructed and have a *good intention* and firm *convictions*; I desire that they should be like the converts of St. Francis Xavier who were known by their virtue and perseverance.

I am sorry you are in distress for money. Take care, however, that the little you can give be well bestowed. Do not let any one be attracted by perishable things, but only by what is incorruptible. Indeed from this point of view I am not sorry that you can say with the Apostle: "gold and silver I have none." Let the grace of Jesus Christ be all your wealth. Nevertheless, if God be pleased in course of time to enable you to give alms, you will do well to distribute it with that prudence which the Holy Ghost alone can bestow on you. I embrace you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

A. R.

XCVII.

TO DON PAGANI AT PRIOR PARK.

On the excellence of the religious state.

Stresa,

Feast of the Purification, 1841.

The question you ask me about Mr. S. shows it would be useful for you to have at hand some good treatise on the Religious State. The most complete is that of Suarez and I should like you to have all the works of this author. Piatti's is a very good book though less ample than that of Lessius, and for simple people I like nothing better than Padre Natale's "Paradise on Earth." It must be borne in mind, however, that what these authors say about the religious state only applies to us in so far as it is in keeping with "the spirit and the letter of our Constitutions," for our Society differs greatly from other religious orders by reason of its simplicity and universality. In Suarez you will find all that is necessary to correct your friend's ideas on the subject of religious vows.

In the meantime you can tell him that "the Apostles were truly and substantially religious and made perpetual vows, for they bound themselves perpetually and irrevocably to the following of Christ." It is the perpetual and irrevocable sacrifice of self that forms the excellence of the religious vows, and this sacrifice is not made by the Faithful in general. Mr. S. should consider that it is from the Church, our Teacher, that we must receive the true doctrine concerning religious vows. Now the Church has always held the religious profession in the highest esteem, and she always considers persons thus consecrated to God as the *elect portion of Christ's flock*. Let him also consider that the perfection of the Gospel consists in the denial of self: "If any man will

come after Me let him deny himself." It is generally speaking only in the religious state where *obedience* and *indifference* are in full force, that the real denial of self can be effectively and perfectly practised: for then every step we take is directed not by our own will but by obedience, that is to say by God's will made known in the surest manner. How is it possible for any one out of religion to have in all things the merit of obedience? It is true that secular priests are dependent on the Bishops; but religious are directly subject to the Chief Bishop, the successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and thus there is more closely drawn a bond of union within the Church. Besides, the obedience of priests to the Bishop is not necessarily minute, and has reference rather to their work than to the direction of their own souls. But in the religious state subjection is combined with the inestimable advantage of spiritual direction. Who can describe all the benefits that accrue to the souls of fervent religious from the direction, the constant admonitions and counsel they receive from superiors; from the living examples of virtue which they have in their brethren; from their pleasant and delightful intercourse; their mutual participation in one another's good works and prayers; the indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs; their mutual charity, and above all their freedom from earthly cares, which enables them to give themselves wholly to God, and to God alone? Moreover if we take into consideration the incomparably greater good that can be effected by forces when united and directed to a single purpose than when they are separated and dispersed, we shall understand that a man who truly loves God and desires to co-operate in the *greatest good*, the "very great fruit" that God expects from His vine, cannot but desire the union of the good and join the closest and most vast association possible: and this he will find in the Religious State.

As to your other letter, nothing is impossible to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all power has been given in heaven and on earth.

A. R.

XCVIII.

TO DON GIUSEPPE SEITI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the spiritual direction of his companions.

Stresa,

February 15th, 1841.

I beg you to take great care of those placed under your charge. You must not be content with working on the surface, but go straight to their souls with diligence and energy. One great impediment is that false prudence which is always afraid of probing the wound for fear of giving offence. The skilful physician, on the contrary, is never satisfied unless he directs all his efforts to the root of the evil. Do not shrink from pursuing self-love in all its windings, in all its deceits. If you do this you will sanctify your subjects, ridding them of their chief enemy and making them pliable, gentle, manageable and obedient; whilst if you spare their self-love you will find them stubborn and peevish, without being able to account for it yourself. Your solicitude must be unfailing. It is not sufficient to give the matter a thought now and then: it must be the occupation of your whole life. Your whole heart must be devoted to so great an object; and love never rests or sleeps. There is no exception to this rule.

You should watch with special care over the Scholastics, of whom you are the *Master*. Assist and guide them at every step that they may advance both in spirit and in learning. Regard them as most dear children. Ask of our Lord light and sanctity to give them, and He will bestow on you His gifts. The tongue of a superior should be always in motion, and seize every opportunity of *instructing*.

A. R.

XCIX.

TO DON GENTILI AT GRACEDIEU.

Charity to the poor must be guided by obedience.

Stresa,

April 15th, 1841.

Deeply as I sympathize with your desire to assist these poor people, still I should like to see the desire kept within bounds, that it may not become a source of temptation and make you lose your peace of mind. This desire, if holy and well-regulated, will not give rise to disquietude, nor will it lessen that complete obedience and submission to superiors by means of which we do God's will, the only true good wherein there is no illusion. Reflect that even the desire of good has its illusions, but you can never be deceived by the submission of your own judgment and the renunciation even of things that appear good but are contrary to obedience. Consider attentively that God does not want from you more than you can give, and you can only give what obedience allows. Not to be content with this, because you want to do more, would be rashness, presumption, want of confidence in God and a deceit of the devil. For heaven's sake, my dear brother, hold fast to the fundamental and infallible principles of our vocation, and rest assured that if you do so the words of the Psalmist will one day be fulfilled: "The shout of exultation and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just."

When I hear of anyone wavering with regard to these fundamental principles, I tremble; without them we should be building on sand. Therefore drive away the temptations to which you allude: offer your sacrifice in all

humility. Do not try to do more than you feel able to do, remember the wise proverbs : " more haste, less speed " and " slow and sure." What would you do if in your efforts to do much, God should allow you to fall in the midst of your course? Would it not have been better not to go beyond the wishes of superiors and to have the assistance of God? This you will always have if you place all your confidence in obedience. Not so however if in any way, directly or indirectly, under any pretext or through any trick or sophism of the devil, you succeed in *eluding* the law of obedience. Act loyally therefore, with moderation, tranquillity of spirit and steadfastness in your holy vocation. It is unworthy of a member of our Institute to say like a child : " other priests on the mission do this or that, and why should not I?" Each one of us should say : " I did not consecrate myself to God in order to do as other priests do, but in order to yield myself as a holocaust to God in obedience, in poverty, in self-denial, in humiliation and all the other virtues taught me by my crucified Lord. This is my desire, in this shall my heart find peace : " In peace in the self-same I shall sleep and take my rest." O blessed thoughts! O refuge and retreat of the diffident soul! " The lofty mountains for the stags, the rock is a refuge for the coneys."

It is easy to begin well, but the difficulty is to continue well without getting into trouble : " not he that begins but he that perseveres," etc. In order to keep out of difficulties, especially in your position, much foresight is needed, and true foresight is the prerogative only of the obedient, who place their trust in God. The success we meet with at the outset may be an occasion of illusion and vainglory; we flatter ourselves that we can do a great deal and forget that we can do nothing. Then we dare to pass the limits set by God, and in the height of prosperity and triumph we fall shamefully to earth amid the mockery of the demons who deceived us by feeding our self-love and our imagination. For the rest, you may be quite sure that I am not insensible to the sufferings of these poor people. To entertain the notion that your Superiors are devoid of

charity, or that they do not understand the circumstances in which you are placed, or that they are not fully informed would be one of those rash judgments with which the spirit of falsehood hoodwinks us even as he did Eve. But even if this were really so, there is always the *rock* of obedience to which the true Christian must cling blindly under all circumstances. I beg of you to console me by showing me in your next letter that you clearly understand the principles of true devotion, of sanctity, of the Institute. Recollect that the thought of your being *alone* causes me no little anxiety. Give me therefore proofs of a well-balanced mind and of the prudence and wisdom necessary in your position.

Pray for your affectionate servant and brother in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

A. R.

C.

TO DON BELISY AT PRIOR PARK.

He urges him not to give credence to certain malicious rumours.

Rovereto,

September 28th, 1841.

I hear that you and Father Vice-Provincial are distressed by a letter from Rome, written by a priest Don C., in which he speaks of the probable prohibition of my *Treatise on Conscience*. I am more sorry for your distress than for anything else, and for your consolation I will send you a few lines, which you will show to our dear Pagani.

I assure you then that if in my *Treatise* or any other work I should have advanced propositions judged worthy of censure by the Holy See, I should most certainly be prepared, with the Divine help, to recall and condemn them, as is the duty of every true Christian, without any distinction or subtlety.

In the second place I do not believe that the Holy See has any intention of condemning my book; but I think these rumours proceed from a party hostile to the Institute and that they are spread about artfully in order to intimidate us, and inspire distrust. This is a real persecution of the enemy and a most crafty one. A pamphlet is in circulation all over Italy, accompanied by the most mischievous reports. Every day something new is invented which is contradicted the next day, the most absurd rumours succeed one another. I have written a reply to the above mentioned *libel*, and send you a copy so that you may understand the true state of the case. You will see from the reply whether it is likely that there are any condemned propositions in my *Treatise on Conscience*. At any rate they cannot be those denounced in that *libel*, printed without the publisher's name, and under the soubriquet of Eusebio Cristiano. I have heard no talk about any other incriminated propositions. I conclude that this priest Don C. must have written merely what he had heard from the faction which has indeed been formed against us, and whose tactics consist precisely in spreading abroad rumours and false alarms. We must fight our battle in the spirit of peace and charity, with the arms of faith and prayer, and by constantly opposing truth to falsehood, light to darkness. This is how matters stand. Let us pray and trust in God. At the same time I beg you not to believe blindly all that people say and not to distress yourselves without cause.

A. R.

CI.

TO DON PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

He answers a question as to whether members of the Institute may take recreation with seculars.

Rovereto,

October 11th, 1841.

I have received the report sent me by dear Belisy, and I will reply to your question forthwith.

Since "the Institute chooses a life of retirement with the intention of quitting it as soon as charity towards our neighbour calls us forth," it is only right that for the present our Fathers at Prior Park should give up their own private recreation in order to share in the general recreation if charity requires it. This charity takes into consideration not only the good that may be done among the students by holding friendly intercourse with them, but also the satisfaction we may give to the Bishop and the other superiors by so doing, and the removal of any ground of complaint.

However, since charity towards our neighbour must be an act of the love of God, the Superior must take heed that there be no diminution of: 1st our desire to serve and to love God; 2nd our obedience and concord with superiors; 3rd mutual union and love among the brothers. You must be guided by circumstances in making your arrangements. Our brothers might form two sets, having recreation in common and with the students on alternate days. Or else each of you might take his turn to go to the general recreation and the rest remain together. It might be found advisable to add to the general recreation with the students a second short recreation among yourselves; or, possibly

to keep apart whilst you all have recreation in the same place. But the chief point is that in going to recreation with the seculars all should be deeply convinced that they are going to perform an act of Christian kindness, to serve God and mortify their own inclinations, and before joining the recreation they should make this intention explicitly, commending the issue to God.

Moreover, the manner of making recreation should be studied. We should not show any distaste for conversation on ordinary topics, provided they be not objectionable, joining in the discussions and taking everything in good part, content to derive instruction and profit for ourselves from all that is said. By cheerfulness and a kindly manner, with light and pleasant conversation we should endeavour to make ourselves agreeable. It is best not to treat of religious topics unless the conversation falls naturally on them, and even then they should be spoken of briefly, though persuasively, and with deference to all present. If others seem not to care for our conversation, we should be patient and not lose heart but try and make ourselves more interesting by our discourse, pleasing manners, &c. What a field for the exercise of charity! What mortification is required!

Lastly, it would be well to select certain definite acts of mutual charity and obedience, certain tokens of submission, attachment and Christian affection, which may supply for any loss in the general recreation. It will be still more profitable for all to make interior acts of those virtues that may seem most endangered. With the aid of these and similar expedients, the recreations taken with seculars will not I trust prove detrimental, nay, they will be of service, rendering our virtue more manly and robust, a thing which is necessary for the attainment of the great object of our Institute.

May the blessing and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

A. R.

CII.

TO DON PIETRO RIGLER AT TRENT.

On vocation to the religious state.

Rovereto,

October 14th, 1841.

During our interview at Rovereto, I noticed no want of respect on your part, nor any lack of courtesy. I assure you that you gave me no cause for complaint, and I have nothing to find fault with. Though we apparently differed I believe that in substance we were agreed. I only meant to magnify the goodness of God, who takes complacency in those who desire to love Him beyond measure and make use of all the means He recommends for the attainment of perfection. I meant to show the excellence of a lively *faith* in this Divine goodness, by saying that such faith can never be confounded. The man who looks to God for earthly things may perhaps not obtain them; but he who hopes in God and prays without ceasing for justice, holiness, perfection, cannot fail to receive what he asks through the merits of our Lord, because our God is holy, and "holy is His name;" because He wills our sanctification, "this is the will of God your sanctification;" because He has set before us for our imitation the type of perfection: "he that will come after Me, let him deny himself." Hence the hope and confidence of the man who asks for such things as these should have no limit. He can say with all reason: "Thou, O Lord, hast marvelously established me in hope." Therefore I am led to believe that no one can err in seeking that which is most perfect, if he desires it, prays for it, and uses the proper means for obtaining it.

Is it not true, then, that we were substantially agreed in holding these sentiments which do not exclude, but rather embrace the special rules laid down by spiritual writers for the discernment of a religious vocation? Following this great rule, I admit into our little Institute all those who seem to me to have a sincere intention of seeking after absolute perfection, for I know that Jesus Christ has said: "him that cometh to me I will not cast out," and I should not dare to act differently. To act otherwise would seem to me a want of confidence, it would look as though one did not expect the gift of perfection, whereas God never leaves His gifts incomplete, if we on our part co-operate with His grace. I do not require those called, to be already perfect, but that they should desire perfection, and ask it of God and expect it of Him.

These are general principles and apply to ordinary cases, but I am well aware that God sometimes gives special light to certain souls. This may be your case. I therefore respect all your resolutions past and present, praying always for you as for myself, that the Lord may make you entirely His, that He may detach you from all things and enlarge your heart so as to embrace all mankind, and in short, that He may bring you to the height of perfection. I hope that you will have the charity to do the same for me, and to pray especially that I may really be converted once for all.

Your most unworthy servant in Christ,

A. R.

CIII.

TO THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Counsels regarding the spiritual life.

Christmas, 1841.

My daughters, you must learn to appreciate your sublime vocation by which you are called to be serviceable to your neighbour, mindful of what the Divine Master Jesus said to His disciples: "This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you" (St. John xv. 12).

Cherish an ardent desire of perfection, but without anxiety, which would disquiet or trouble you, mindful of what the Divine Master Jesus said to His disciples: "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth do I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (St. John xiv. 27).

Hate sin more than death; but if any one has the misfortune to fall into sin, let her repent and rise again without being discouraged, mindful of the teaching of the Beloved Disciple: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that you may not sin; but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for those of the whole world" (1 St. John ii. 1).

Believe that you will obtain pardon of your sins, not by speaking much at Confession nor by minute scrutiny of the gravity or lightness of your faults, nor by having recourse to one Confessor rather than to another; but only by repentance and a lively faith in that power to forgive sins which Christ conferred on His ministers. Remember also our Lord's words: "Take courage

daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole" (St. Matt. xix. 22). You will, therefore, be equally satisfied with any Confessor whom Superiors may assign to you.

Love correction, and receive it with a grateful heart and serene countenance, mindful of what the Divine Master Jesus said: "He that is of God heareth the words of God" (St. John viii. 47).

Endeavour to become proficient in whatever you are taught, but if anyone, who has done what she could, does not succeed let her be resigned without disquieting herself, and let her still go on with all diligence, labour and constancy, omitting nothing on her part that would ensure success, being mindful of what the lord said to the servant who had hidden the one talent under ground: "Thou wicked and slothful servant. . . . thou oughtest to have committed my money to the bankers and at my coming I should have received my own with usury" (St. Matt. xxv. 26, 27).

Do not prefer one thing that is commanded you to another. If you place all your *pleasure* in your *duty*, you will apply with equal alacrity and energy to whatever God requires of you, and you will not neglect anything however contrary to your inclinations, imitating in this also our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: "I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of Him that sent Me" (St. John vi. 38).

Beware of the imagination, and do not attend to the vain and disquieting judgments which it suggests, but proceed in everything with intelligence, since our Divine Master Jesus has said: "I am come a Light into the world; that whosoever believeth in Me may not remain in darkness" (St. John xii. 46).

Do not be disturbed by anything that may happen against your will. If you remain at peace it will be a sign that you love God and are subject to His Providence, which disposes of all things and watches continually over you. Remember what the Divine Master Jesus said: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (St. Matt. x. 30).

Be guided by obedience rather than by your own thoughts and judgment, for obedience is the manifestation of the will of God, according to those words of the Divine Master Jesus: "He that heareth you heareth Me, he that despiseth you despiseth Me" (St. Luke x. 16).

A. R.

CIV.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

He exhorts him to overcome temptation by candour and mortification.

Stresa,

New Year's Day, 1842.

My dear brother in Christ, may the grace of our Lord circumcise our hearts to-day and for ever!

You have done well to write to me with that frankness which is so pleasing in the eyes of God, but another time write sooner, write as soon as the trouble begins. Oh! how precious are our Rules to those who love them with all their heart and observe them faithfully! How useful are they in obtaining peace of heart and defeating the wiles of the enemy! For my part, I think it is impossible that anyone should be lost who adheres faithfully to the spirit of such rules. I exhort you most earnestly to engrave them on your heart.

You know very well your weak point: it is the *imagination*. This you should regard as your worst enemy; from that quarter you will get nothing but lies and treachery, when it is left a prey to the wicked one, who knows only too well how to disturb it. Do always the contrary to what it suggests, and you will have a safe rule for your guidance. It is true this costs something, but violence is

necessary if you would gain the kingdom of heaven. Violence can only be overcome by violence.

This violence is indispensable if we wish to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered violence in so many ways, and our first attack must be directed against self-love. We must be firmly persuaded that the mortification of our self-love is our greatest good. It is absolutely necessary that this great principle, containing the very essence of the Gospel, should not merely touch us on the surface, but should penetrate into the very depths of our heart. We must leave no stone unturned to obtain this disposition ; we must *pray, meditate, humble ourselves, entreat our superiors* and above all conjure them *to probe us to the quick*. Here is salvation, to desire the *death of self*, by dint of cutting and wounding it. O my dearest brother, resolve to arrive at this during the new year, you will be happier every day ! Then you will understand the spirit of the Institute to which God has called you, a spirit of humility and annihilation of the natural man in the wounds of Jesus Christ.

The infinite beauty of turning all things to the service of God, the infinite advantage of being humbled, the infinite merit of finding always and everywhere the will of God through obedience, the infinite sweetness of loving and being loved by so many holy souls, your companions, the infinite glory of following our Saviour to Calvary, walking in His blood-stained footsteps and drinking of His chalice . . . these are thoughts that should drive away all clouds from our mind, as the night is driven away by the rising of the sun ! Do not doubt, my dear brother, that you will triumph completely, and become a true child of the Institute, I mean *a saint* ; but we must not sleep whilst the enemy is on the watch.

May the most amiable Jesus, who to day first shed His blood for us, enlighten you, strengthen you, enrich you with His gifts !

A. R.

CV.

TO ARNOLDO FEHR AT DOMODOSSOLA

On the importance of perfect obedience.

Stresa,

January 12th, 1842.

You were arguing on false premises when you concluded that the Vice-Rector, who is Superior for the time being, had no authority to alter the arrangements made by the absent Rector. Holding the place of Superior of the House, he may make such alterations as seem best in accordance with the inspiration of God, just as a Superior may change his own orders as soon as he thinks necessary. Even if it were true (which it is not) that the Vice-Rector is not authorized to alter the arrangements of the absent Rector, how can you tell that the change has not been sanctioned by the Rector himself, or by a higher Superior? Besides, is it the business of a subject to sit in judgment on his own superiors? My dear Arnaldo, is this true obedience, that great virtue which contains true supernatural wisdom! Would you have reasoned thus, if the new order given by the new Superior had been to your liking? Examine yourself well, and notice whether a want of indifference and self-denial may not have been the cause of your mind being so darkened as to judge the conduct of him whom you should consider your judge and your guide. I must say the same as to the resentment you felt because you were not listened to and because you were interrupted by your Superior. Do you not know yet, my dear Arnaldo, to what a height of perfection you are called? Do you not know what is taught in the school of Jesus Christ, in which you are? Do you not understand

the profound meaning of those words, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself"? Ah, entreat our good Jesus, to give you an interior discernment of His profound doctrine, redolent of abnegation, humility and suffering, a doctrine which can be learnt only at the foot of the Cross and not by reading many books. What astonishes me, reading the strong expressions and human arguments contained in your letter, is that you have not yet understood that superiors are obliged to exercise their subjects in humility, in mortification, in patience and abnegation of their own will. You do not seem to realize what a treasure of true wisdom is contained in these divine virtues. Surely if you understood the excellence of such a treasure you would be deeply attached to it, you would seek for it day and night, you would embrace every occasion of humiliation. Instead of being angry because a Superior has not time to listen to you with all composure, you would be grateful, you would thank him, you would beg him not to spare your self-love, but to humble and mortify you in every way. O how blessed are contradictions and mortifications to the soul that loves Jesus Christ, and aspires to resemble Him as closely as may be! Happy will you be, my Arnaldo, if you receive this light from our Lord!

Do you think that a servant of God, a religious, who cannot bear to be interrupted or have no attention paid him by his own Superior, will ever become a worthy minister in God's service? If you are so sensitive now, what will you do supposing you are sent to preach the Gospel to the heathen and exposed to manifold trials and insults?

Do you fondly imagine you will conquer in a distant combat when you cannot put up with a word, a little rough treatment from your own superiors? What presumption! What blindness! For your own sake, let this unhappy experience show you how much there is still to reform in you, how much of the old man is left. Humility, humility: this is true wisdom! Learn to abase

yourself, to esteem and respect your companions, to obey promptly, joyfully and without reserve : this is the principal study I expect of you. This is the science of the Institute to which God has deigned to call you, an Institute which professes to know only "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified." Rest assured that the only pleasure you can give me is that of seeing you like unto Christ, "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," not censuring the commands of your superiors, but faithful, prompt and cheerful in obedience. In order to arrive at this point, I see you will have to let your studies take the *second place* in your affections. You must give the first place to that virtue which embraces every other virtue and consequently all moral good : perfect and mortified obedience. This must hold the first place in your heart, and you should consider it a *great gain* when you have abandoned study and all things else for the sake of obedience. Think of the great saying of the enlightened St. Francis of Assisi : *We know just as much as we practise.* May Jesus bless you !

A. R.

CVI.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the same subject.

Stresa,

January 19th, 1842.

Yes, my dear son in Christ, open your heart to the light of grace which shows us what a great thing it is to humble oneself incessantly. True humility must be shown in action, by acting under *blind obedience* which is only effected in us by the lifegiving words of Christ. Blessed are they who let the words: "If any man will come after me let him deny himself" penetrate to the very marrow of their bones. These are the bones that shall exult: "The bones that have been humbled shall rejoice." I was glad to perceive from your letter that our Lord "stands at the door and knocks." I trust that you have opened the door to Him, that you will always open it to Him. You may be sure that if, as I hope, you are seeking truth and justice you will find both one and the other in the humiliation of your own heart, for it is there they abide, and elsewhere you will find but a phantom. Not only for the sake of truth and justice should you leave on one side all arguments founded on your own inclinations or natural rights, but also for the sake of obedience, of penance and mortification, for the pure love of God and the desire to resemble your gentle Master and Saviour.

I am glad that you promise *indifference* to everything, even as to renouncing your studies if God through your superiors so ordains. This disposition of mind is required by rectitude and perfection. You will be able to give all that is asked of you by the grace of God. But remember

to pray without ceasing for justice and the grace to conquer yourself perfectly. Now, since I think your dispositions are good, I shall give you the penance you ask for. Read and meditate attentively the first four Rules of Chapter X of the *Common Rules*; try to grasp their beauty, write them in your heart and beg of our Lord to engrave them there Himself.

Adieu, my dearest brother! I embrace and bless you in the Lord.

Your father in Christ,

A. R.

CVII.

TO SISTER CARLOTTA ZANOLLA AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He explains the will of God in her regard.

Stresa,

February 5th, 1842.

My dear daughter in Christ,

This is what God wants of you. You are not to think about yourself but place yourself in the hands of your superiors as in those of God Himself. You are not to desire the habit or to take any step of your own accord, but simply to wait in patience until superiors decide as God may inspire them, and to think only of fulfilling the duties attached to your holy vocation. You must be content with each day as it comes, without thinking about the morrow or what will happen to you. If you do this, you will please God and gain the great end for which you were created and for which you were called to a state of perfection. Be humble and mortified therefore, consider yourself unworthy of anything; then you will be tranquil and joyful if you are forgotten or made to wait. Yes, my daughter, this is the way to go to heaven, and no

one could give you better advice. Do not think about what is of no use. The thoughts now engrossing you about yourself and what superiors will do with you, come for the most part from that mischievous self-love which must be conquered and mortified by the grace of Jesus Christ. You are not, as you say, to be ready to leave the Institute, but to live and die in it, leading a humble, laborious life, resigned to God's will and endeavouring to learn all that you are taught. Courage then! Put away the thought of self and think only of imitating the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A. R.

CVIII.

TO GERMINIO MARTINELLI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He exhorts him to correspond with the grace of his vocation by prayer and study.

Stresa,

February 8th, 1842.

My dear son in Christ,

I have read with pleasure the account you have given of yourself. Endeavour with all your might to acquire all those virtues which are required by the holy vocation that God has been pleased to bestow on you. What an obligation you are under, my dear brother, of corresponding to such a grace! It is by complete, absolute, and faithful correspondence to this great grace that you can both preserve it and reach the end for which you were created and called.

I advise you, therefore, to cultivate, in the first place, the spirit of *recollection* and *interior fervour*. You must learn to pray in your heart, to converse unceasingly with God and speak to our Lord as it were heart to heart,

to walk in His Divine presence, to call upon Him, to thank Him, to deplore your sins and humble yourself. In the second place I exhort you as earnestly as I can to hold your Rules in the highest esteem, to love them and to set an example of most faithful *observance* to your companions, never allowing yourself to be led astray by what you may see in others. Thirdly, I recommend you to apply yourself to *study*, Latin especially. If you succeed in becoming a good Latin scholar, you will find it a great help in the exercise of charity. I wish you, my dear brother, to do your utmost, and all for the love of God. Learn to appreciate the Latin authors and practise speaking and writing in Latin.

Nevertheless, the principal thing is that you should become a *true religious*, a child of the Institute, humble, obedient, full of self-sacrifice and charity towards your neighbour, indifferent to all things until the Divine will is made known ; but when it is made known by the voice of superiors be no longer indifferent, but ardent, courageous, and laborious in order that it may be accomplished fully and perfectly. All this you will obtain if you become a man of prayer. May God bless you and may Jesus keep you in His Heart !

A. R.

CIX.

TO DON LUIGI GENTILI IN ENGLAND.

He exhorts him to perfect obedience and long-suffering in his apostolic labours.

Stresa,

February 10th, 1842.

My dear brother in Christ,

Let us try to go forward, trusting in the Lord, doing what little good we can, walking in simplicity and rectitude without too many calculations and reflections, and with great charity towards all men. I should not like to see the least sign of bitterness in your heart. No, my dear Don Luigi, no : love, rectitude, beneficence and courtesy towards all ! I greatly desire and daily pray that you may become a saint, as indeed you will provided that you are docile to your superiors, trying to be inwardly persuaded of the correctness of their judgment and putting aside your own views if they do not coincide with theirs. There is no sanctity apart from humiliation and self-renunciation. This is the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

I pray unceasingly that God may bless your labours and accept the oblation of yourself contained in them. I beseech Him, if it so please Him, to send more labourers in order that I may be able to give you some fellow-workers. At the same time I see that we must await His mercies with long-suffering and resignation, bearing in mind this great principle : that God requires of us no more than we can do, and that we must not lose heart, but have compassion on the flock without a shepherd and persevere in prayer. This is what our Saviour did, and He has taught

us to do the same.—“Seeing the multitudes He had compassion on them because they were distressed and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then He saith to His disciples: The harvest indeed is great but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send forth labourers into His harvest.” What a comfort these words ought to be to you, my brother, when you see that our Lord Himself had but few fellow-workers in tending His flock and gathering in His harvest.

I may tell you that I received a letter from a Cardinal at Rome the other day, assuring me that the Holy Father is satisfied with my writings and recognizes the purity of my doctrine. *Deo gratias!*

A. R.

CX.

TO DON BELISY IN ENGLAND.

In the Institute, the spirit of contemplation must be united with great activity.

Rovereto,

Good Friday (March 25th), 1842.

I was much pleased with your *memorandum*, bearing the date of the 16th Feb., and I have read it attentively. You have given me a vivid picture of the state of the Establishment and of our little religious family. I fully sympathize with you in your difficult circumstances, but since these are over-ruled by God, I look upon them, and hope you will do the same, as grand opportunities given you by the Creator of being trained and exercised in all virtues, and especially Christian prudence. This reflection should make you love your present condition, for there is nothing good or lovable to be found but in the acquisition of those merits that are gained only by con-

flict. "No one shall be crowned unless he strive lawfully," and "virtue is made perfect in infirmity." This is the aim of our Institute, the centre of all our heart's affections. But I do not think I need stay to encourage you to do your duty: that is, as you know, to remain constant in your endeavour to fulfil all the obligations arising from the circumstances in which God has placed you. Nor will I stop to praise what I find worthy of praise in the conduct of all our brothers in England, for it will be better if all your praise and your crown is reserved for you by God. Instead, I will notice a few things which made no slight impression on me whilst reading your *memorandum*. These remarks will, I trust, be of use to you if you reflect on them in the presence of God.

In the first place, I cannot approve of your refusal to examine the Clerics, and Fr. Vice-Provincial seems to have acted prudently in reproving you for it. The reasons which you allege are subtle and plausible but not solid. Then the delicacy of your position, the importance of yielding wherever there is no sin and of not finding sin where there is none, were reasons that should have led to your accepting the office readily.

The charges brought against us, in so far as they are false, should not alarm us, but we must try to profit by them, in order to know ourselves better and to get rid of such defects as may be disclosed to us by criticism. Those who have enemies would do well to read Plutarch's treatise: *De capienda ex hostibus utilitate*. Now I am afraid our critics may be right in accusing us of a want of energy. My fear arises from my general experience of our brothers in Italy also. I find that when they have once learned to appreciate the good order and comfort of a regular life and the practices of devotion they are disinclined for anything else, slow to act, reluctant to change the order of their occupations, and unable to preserve holy interior solitude, recollection and union with God in the midst of their active duties. The consequence is they undervalue these occupations, not sufficiently

considering them as belonging to the service of God and as real and acceptable *prayer*; they consider the thing from a material point of view, hence they find their work an occasion of distraction, and begin to think they are doing no good or that they are losing the interior spirit. This is a great mistake, utterly alien to the spirit of the Institute of Charity, which is founded on those words, "This is My commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you," and which tends to make its members most active in all ways, according to the order of Providence. The Institute requires that we should know how to leave God for God. At the call of Providence all should be ready to leave the delights of the contemplative life for the labours of the active life. All should make it their one aim to adore God with their whole heart and to live and breathe for Him alone in all their active employments. Thus while they hold intercourse with men for charity's sake their conversation will be in heaven, and like their Master they will be examples of prayer to the recluse and of activity to the man of the world. For this reason it is enjoined in the Constitutions that in the beginning we must choose the contemplative life, and later on, abandon it for the active life when called thereto by God. Hence § 443 of the *Constitutions* says: "A greater number of prayers ought not to be prescribed for common use (in addition to the full hour set apart for meditation) on account of the labours of charity which may devolve on us. But the superiors will be able to enjoin on some or on all such prayers as they find desirable for them to use and as time will allow, or they may leave each one to follow his own devotion." So also the Seventh Lesson of the *Maxims of Perfection* describes the activity suitable to our vocation: "In this manner it may happen, that the humble and fervent Christian, who has chosen a hidden life, removed from the dangers of men, a life of perpetual contemplation divided between long prayers and study, or of one engaged in some profession or mechanical art, attending to the

necessities of life, having but some moments of rest : it may happen, I say, that such a man be urged by charity to quit his retreat (which he loved not through slothfulness but through sincere humility) in order to enter upon an active life ; he may be plunged even, if such be the will of God, into a sea of cares, troubles, and occupations for the service of his neighbour—occupations important or unimportant, honourable or mean, according to the appointment of Divine Providence, and the order in which they present themselves to him.”

This is precisely the case of my dear brothers at Prior Park. Their services are not merely asked as a favour but claimed as a right. These services should be given, for God and in God, even if it be necessary to curtail the practices of the contemplative life, saving always the discretion of superiors who must see that the brothers do not over-tax their physical strength, and must exhort them constantly to maintain the spirit of union amid external work, and to keep their intention directed to the glory of God, making use of ejaculatory prayer and acts of oblation and self-sacrifice. In fine, I desire that we should be the most active of men, and that the spirit of God, a spirit of the utmost activity, should lead us also in this respect.

It will be objected, perhaps, that our daily routine does not admit of our doing a great many things ; but the Constitutions teach us to deviate from our usual course for the sake of charity towards our neighbour. In § 441 we read : “ While they remain in their state of choice, all their time must be spent in some useful and pious occupation, for we shall render account to the Lord our God for every moment of time as for all the other talents which He has entrusted to us. There will therefore be from the very beginning a regular distribution of hours for day and night. But when duties of charity supervene each one must give up his ordinary occupation.” As for the Rules on Domestic Order they were intended for the regular houses and not for the missions. It is true that there are certain strict regulations

for the Novitiate House, but as your house is not a Novitiate these rules do not apply to you, and they cannot be put in force until it shall please God to give us a Novitiate in England. I hope, in the goodness of God, that we shall eventually have one at Loughborough.

With regard to the active services which our Fathers should render to the College, I should like them to give even the eight hours a day demanded by the Bishop, provided they have the necessary health and strength, and in consideration of this great work of charity, I would dispense them from all that is not of strict obligation, except the hour of meditation, and even in some cases from part of this, though only with the special permission of the Superior General. How pleasing to God would be such activity as this, all for His glory! Living as we must do by faith, we ought certainly to expect a great increase of grace under these circumstances, a grace that will abundantly recompense us for what we should otherwise have obtained by our practices of piety. Charity requires great things, and our Institute expects great things of us; and great things cannot be achieved without a great development of charitable activity. The world requires great things and displays great activity, but not great charity; the Institute requires immense activity, but all in the charity of Christ. There are, perhaps, but few members of the Institute who have thoroughly grasped this point. The greater number are still like novices; they halt at the starting point of the Institute, the contemplative life, and do not dart forward in thought and affection to the goal, which is the most active and universal charity, *our Lord's own commandment*. But Jesus Christ has set them on the road, He will guide them all whither His spirit always leads His disciples. "This my hope is laid up in my bosom."

I wish all my dear Brothers at Prior Park to exert themselves to the utmost in order to help the College and give satisfaction to the Bishop, because I think it is not your business to say whether the College is likely to

succeed or not, and our conduct should not be affected by such considerations. I think it is more perfect to do our work for charity's sake with simplicity and constancy, leaving to God the disposal of His servants. Even though we may not do much good in the College, it will be something if we prevent harm being done. For the rest, if we speak the truth with humility, if we work with humility, with great patience and active charity, we may be sure that our example will do good to some individuals in the College, if not to the whole College. The defects which you notice do not prevent the work of a College or Seminary from being good in itself. Moreover it is not our business to enquire into what may be going wrong; it is enough for us that we ourselves do what is right. It seems to me, my dear brother, that you go too far on certain points; it seems to me that you are over-subtle and that there is a tinge of severity, and even of rigorism, in your judgments on things. This I attribute to the inexperience of youth. You have therefore all the more reason to respect the opinion of your Father Vice-Provincial, even though some subtle reason may lead you to think him mistaken. I know well that you have this respect for your Superior, and that God gives you the grace of obedience and much docility; but at the same time I perceive clearly that you are sometimes too subtle, and that you have not got that comprehensive view of things that one acquires only with age and by listening respectfully to the opinion of one's elders.

It is moreover very easy to pass beyond bounds in the use of strong expressions. I do not positively assert that you have done so; I see that you are arguing in support of your views, and I must confess that I know by my own experience, how easy it is when you try to prove a thing very clearly to others, to use certain expressions that render the evidence too poignant, without actually exaggerating. In a scientific treatise such expressions, when they do not exceed the truth, are natural and sound well enough, but in conversation they seldom produce a good effect. It is very

easy to give offence involuntarily in conversation; for people, as a rule, are offended when they see the evidence on our side is very strong, or when we are very positive. Therefore, try to avoid as much as possible all expressions that bear the least trace of ridicule or sarcasm, though they may seem appropriate. I know well how hard it is to follow such advice always and under all circumstances; I know it requires great evenness of mind and meekness of heart, but do the best you can. At the same time I do not object to your telling the Bishop in all simplicity what you think. Nor do I object to our Fathers avowing fearlessly but with mildness and humility the principles which guide our Institute. Nay, I consider that, under the circumstances, this is the best line of action you can take, the only way, in fact, by which you and your companions will be able to do some good. It is by maintaining gently, but firmly, the true principles of piety, of ecclesiastical discipline, of wise education and of Christian philosophy that you will be able to gain over the minds and hearts of the well-disposed. By speaking out the truth modestly, frequently and openly, by *reasoning quietly, without being offensive or captious*, you will gain another good result, namely, you will help to solve the question of our remaining at Prior Park, and that *according to God*.

May our most loving Redeemer say more to you to-day from His Cross and bless us all! Show this letter to our dear Fr. Vice-Provincial. Adieu!

A. R.

CXI.

TO FATHER PETER HUTTON IN ENGLAND.

Congratulations on entering the Institute.

Stresa,

April 29th, 1842.

I have read with real pleasure the letter containing the expression of your good dispositions. Let us be grateful to the Divine Goodness, which has gathered us together in charity, in order that we may be one heart and soul and that our Lord Jesus Christ may receive in us the accomplishment of His Divine petition, when He besought His Father, "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee, that "they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." All our Constitutions, my dear brother, are summed up in these words. Here we have the foundation of the hope that enables us to venture on the great task set before us; and this foundation is no other than the prayer of our Saviour: "Not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their words shall believe in Me." Without this what should we presume to do, we especially who are but a *little flock*? But in Christ, and through the efficacy of His prayer, "we can do all things." Thanks be to God who has added you to our little company, and has not suffered you to be scandalised by our weakness, and our nothingness, for in truth we are as *things that are not*. Ah my dear brother, it is for this reason precisely that we hope to see God glorified in us. Only let us give ourselves up to Him, and not set bounds by our limited thoughts and affections to His unbounded wisdom and love! May He do with us as He pleases and make use of us in any part of the world, in any office, state and condition, amid evil report and

good report, amid dangers to the soul and in peace, amid tribulations and consolations! How good and pleasant a thing it is to be dedicated to God without reserve! Give me a share, I beg of you, in your fervent prayers, for no one is in greater need of them than your affectionate servant in Christ,

A. R.

CXII.

TO DON GAGLIARDI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Natural instincts, when good, are to be controlled not suppressed.

Stresa,

November 5th, 1842.

I was glad to hear that the charity of our Lord among our brethren grows stronger and stronger. God grant it may become perfect! Do all you can to obtain this happy result by your kindness, your example, your words. Bear in mind the words of the 20th of the Common Rules, "nothing contrary to charity may be permitted," and enforce this rule strictly.

With regard to what you say about F., I must make a remark. Not every desire of pleasing superiors is to be censured, for it may lead to the desire of pleasing God; besides it is a stimulus and incentive to do good, provided it does not become the sole or predominating motive, in which case it would be a great fault. As a general rule, if natural motives for the practice of virtue are kept within bounds and subordinate to the principal end, they should not be repressed but rather ignored, and we must simply go on inculcating in general terms the necessity of a *pure intention*. If the Brothers acquire this, they will become divested of earthly affections in proportion as their souls grow in Divine grace.

A. R.

CXIII.

TO FATHER PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

He explains the principles by which superiors should be guided in receiving subjects.

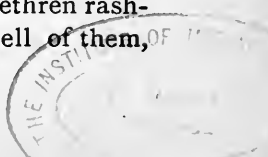
Stresa,

November 17th, 1842.

My dearest brother in our Lord Jesus Christ! May His Spirit reign always in our hearts!

I have received your two letters from Lyons and from London, and I have offered hearty thanks to God and His holy Angel for your safe journey. I will now reply to what you say in the first letter about the facility with which we receive people into the Institute. I can assure you that I never receive anyone out of a desire of increasing our number. I am perfectly content with the little company that our Lord has sent us: in this also I behold His wisdom and goodness; I adore and rejoice. I will therefore explain to you the maxims which guide me in this matter; they are in accordance with our Constitutions. I draw a distinction between *admission* into the house and *promotion* to the various grades in the Institute. I receive all those who ask for admittance, provided they give me some reason to hope they will succeed. I have this hope with regard to those who, in the first probation, assure me that they understand and intend to practise what is laid down in the *Maxims* and *Memorial of the First Probation* unless I have a *positive* reason to think the contrary. The reasons which induce me to require so little from postulants are as follows:—

1st. I have a great dread of judging my brethren rashly, and am therefore always inclined to hope well of them,



and rather than act otherwise I willingly run the risk of being deceived, of incurring expense and of suffering inconvenience. I have never regretted taking this course; it has given me much peace and consolation, and God has never permitted the deceptions which have been practised on me to have evil consequences.

2nd. This seems to me a means of imitating the loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who says, "him that cometh to Me I will not cast out." These words are quoted to this very purpose by our Constitutions and by the most celebrated Rules of Holy Founders. It is true that many come to us with their feet rather than with their heart; but of this I cannot judge until I have positive proof. Besides when a disciple of Christ comes to us, I consider his coming under two aspects. Either he is sent to become a member of the Institute, or in order that the Institute may exercise charity in his behalf. The spirit of the Institute is such that it accepts, whenever possible, the occasions of doing good presented by Providence. Now, I say, here is one of these occasions; let us receive this good man and do all that charity suggests for his soul and body. Our Lord Jesus Christ will be pleased to see us act thus; and the Institute will suffer no loss thereby, but will have the merit of good works. The brother who comes to us will hear the Word of God while he stays amongst us; and if he does not become a member of our Institute, he will carry away with him a seed which will perhaps one day produce fruit in his heart.

3rd. As the Institute is averse to seeking anything of its own accord, so on the other hand it purposes to be careful not to neglect any portion of that good which is offered to it by the goodness of God; it diligently goes to meet Divine Providence and spares not itself in seconding its calls. Now if I send away a postulant without being certain that he has no vocation, do I not expose myself to the danger of rejecting a gift proffered me by the goodness of God? Our neighbour's request is one of the signs of Providence. Therefore if one of my brethren

in Christ presents himself and I have no positive reason for refusing him, I ought not only to receive him but to do my utmost for him with all patience and charity, and to persevere in my efforts until I am convinced that it is impossible for him to become a member of the Institute. Then only shall I be justified before God in sending him away; indeed, it would be my duty to dismiss him forthwith. But if the Institute does not do all in its power with patient long-suffering to assist that postulant by teaching, educating and proving him, shall we not always have reason to fear that we may have driven away one whom God wished to add to our number in reward of our charity and earnest prayers to the Divine Majesty? For it is certain that God does not mean us to expect things nicely finished and complete from His Hands; He wishes us to procure things for ourselves by labour and the sweat of our brow. He will bless our labour if we place our confidence in Him alone. Nothing, nothing must be lost through sloth; as the Scripture says: "Let not a particle of the good gift escape thee."

I should wish every superior who has the faculty to accept postulants to be guided in all simplicity by these maxims, which are those of the Constitutions. It only remains to make the application of these rules; this application may differ under varying circumstances while the principles remain always the same. For example, it is certain that a superior may be in a special degree enlightened by God and thus able to tell promptly who is called and who is not; and in this case, having a special light from God he may act more promptly in accepting or dismissing a postulant. But superiors must distrust their own judgment, and not give ear to the suggestions of the imagination, the source of rash judgments. In order to be on the safe side, they should be guided by positive reasons, and should avail themselves of the advice of the Consultors, as I myself always do if possible.

The application of the aforesaid maxims may vary also by reason of external circumstances. If these are

such that the reception of unpromising postulants would be burdensome and detrimental to the Institute (as it would be in England, where we have not the means spiritual and temporal of rendering them charitable assistance), then we certainly must confine ourselves to receiving those who are most likely to succeed.

Let me add another remark which I should have made before, with regard to the talents and other endowments which you would like to see in members of our Institute. The true object of the Institute, which we should never lose sight of, is holiness of life. We must pay no heed to anything else, and we must have a special tenderness for those of our brothers who are poor, deficient in natural advantages and even ignorant. I assure you that the dullest and most lowly of our brothers, if he be good and holy, is as dear to me as the most learned, the most highly born, the most gifted, nay, he is far more dear to me if I find he has more virtue, for I remember the love that Jesus Christ bore to the poor and those despised by men. Therefore I think we should receive all men of good will. It is true that talent and other endowments, if accompanied by virtue, may enable our companions to do a great amount of good for their neighbour, and they may be of great assistance to the Institute. But I am content that we should do what good we can to our neighbour, and let the Institute get on as best it can. Let us accept all the means, all the gifts and talents that God gives us; let us desire no more than we have; but at the same time reject nothing. And when we have amassed these "talents" with great care that nothing be lost, let us trade therewith with all diligence and faithfulness. All talents can be put to good use in the Institute, even those of the least account, for the Institute refuses no work of charity. If a man cannot preach, he may make a good infirmarian; a person who is not clever enough for business or capable of writing a book, will perhaps be very useful in a school, were it only to teach the A. B. C.

To come now to the second point, viz., the principles

on which I act when it is a question of promotion to higher grades. Here I think it necessary to be as rigorous as in the first instance we are lenient. Just as I refuse no one without *positive* reasons, so I must have *positive* reasons and proofs to convince me of the candidate's fitness for a higher grade before admitting him thereto. If there are positive proofs that a postulant has no vocation, I dismiss him, and that without a moment's delay, as soon as I have been able to form a prudent judgment based on those proofs. If however, there are no positive proofs for or against him, I must have patience and see that he be assisted by every means that charity can suggest, by instructions and admonitions, until we can have the matter settled in a satisfactory manner. We have had people in the house a considerable time without their even being admitted to the Novitiate.

Our brothers have, as you know, to pass through a very long probation, during which we have time to know them thoroughly, and they can at any time be sent away. I think that we should be able to avoid those evils which you dread; and even though this system were accompanied by inconveniences and some trifling losses, we must remember that the desire to avoid all inconveniences and detriment savours rather of human prudence than of the perfection and simplicity of the Gospel. Let us be patient and long-suffering and our Lord will take care of us.

In saying all this I have no intention of excusing all that has been done. I have merely set forth the principles by which I have been, in general, guided hitherto, and which I intend to follow still more closely in time to come. A newly-founded Institute encounters many unforeseen difficulties.

Therefore let us pray to God for the Institute and then go on with simplicity and courage.

Yours affectionately,
A. R.

CXIV.

TO DON GAGLIARDI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the importance of having unbounded confidence in God.

Stresa,

December 20th, 1842.

My dear Brother in Jesus Christ and companion in His holy service,

We must be careful not to do injustice to the infinite goodness and mercy of God, who triumphs over the obstacles to His grace presented by our sins and failings, provided that we do two things, namely, *hope* and *pray*. O most sweet hope which confoundeth not! O most efficacious prayer! Do not allow your heart to be confined and narrowed by the spirit of evil, for God desires us to have a great and generous heart: "I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou hast enlarged my heart." This therefore is what above all things I advise you to cultivate: *generosity of heart*. We are full of evil, but God is *infinitely* good. How little we reflect on this word: *infinitely*! If we thought about it would not all our fears be banished? Should we not deem ourselves sure of victory and say: "Though battle should arise against me, in this will I hope." Therefore let us not be deceived by the devil who sometimes tries to overcast our minds with sadness, under the pretence of compunction for our sins. No, our sorrow must always be united with *infinite hope*; for this is according to reason, this is what pleases God. Woe to us if we trust in ourselves, but as to our God let us never tire of saying: "In thee O Lord have I hoped. I shall never be confounded," and of thanking Him, "for Thou O Lord hast marvellously established me in hope."

He whose hope is strong, all things are possible to him; hope is a safe anchor, an invincible weapon.—May the Child Jesus bring to you a great increase of love!

A. R.

CXV.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

Obedience is essential in a member of the Institute.

Stresa,

February 9th, 1843.

Be quite sure of this, that “the greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress thou wilt make.” What will it avail you to learn a great deal, if you do not learn to obey? It is a grievous delusion for one called to the religious life, especially in our Institute, to think he can live without obedience. Is it not time to begin, after two years of novitiate? Will you ever become a true member of the Institute, to the advantage of your own soul and to the glory of God if you do not become perfect in obedience? What is the use of a disobedient religious who cannot overcome himself, or renounce his own judgment, or mortify his passions and inclinations? I should like you to understand clearly the end which the Institute has in view, for then I am sure you would not only obey in all things and renounce your own will, but you would be ready to die rather than disobey and resist your superiors. As obedience brings with it all other virtues, so disobedience brings with it all kinds of defects, especially that hateful one which is most opposed to the spirit of our Institute, duplicity and dissimulation, and even hypocrisy. May God preserve us from the shadows of such evils, all the more because from time to time they show themselves, and the Institute cannot suffer them in her bosom. My dear

son, let everything else go, but obey always, sincerely, fervently, lovingly, with all your heart, loving and venerating *all* who have authority over you as the representatives of God Himself, without distinction of persons. For my part, I am convinced that if there were a second Solomon in the Institute, he would be a source of grief to me rather than of joy and consolation, if he were not at the same time obedient. Nothing is valued in the Institute but the virtue taught by Jesus Christ, and this true virtue is summed up in obedience and charity. Do, I beg of you, try to overcome yourself in such a manner that I may hear from your Superiors and Master that you have become a model of obedience and charity. This is the only thing I expect of any of you. Then there is some ground of hope; then I look for the blessing of God on my dear sons and brothers. May this desire of mine at length move you to satisfy me! May Jesus and Mary bless you and bestow upon you that true good for which you were created and called to perfection!

Your father in Christ,

A. R.

CXVI.

TO FATHER PAGANI AT OSCOTT COLLEGE.

On some means of driving away melancholy.

Stresa,

April 25th, 1843.

What means this melancholy of yours? Who can doubt that it comes from some delusion of the Evil Spirit? Our God is the God of consolation and peace. You may be quite sure that the sadness which comes over you at times is nothing but a subtle trick of the enemy. This sadness he instils into your mind under the semblance of piety: he arouses in the soul a delusive sentiment of sorrow for sins and an extraordinary craving after sensible compunction. The soul believes that she is humbling herself and that she has an insatiable desire for self-abasement; yet in reality all this is nothing but disquietude and bitterness of soul, to be followed by mental darkness, desolation, discouragement and the loss of all spiritual vigour. No, you must not allow yourself to be deceived in this way. If you listen to what I am about to say with docility, if you take it as coming from God through your Superior (remembering that Caiphas prophesied because he was High Priest and that Balaam's ass saw more than the Prophet), you will derive fruit from it, and put to rout a terrible enemy who transforms himself into an angel of light. Well then, I warn you, treating you with the freedom which I believe you desire, to be on your guard against a certain excessive *spiritual austerity*, which makes a man narrow-minded and melancholy. This defect, which must be remedied betimes, is wont to lead to fearful results. It was only in virtue of his heroic and blind obedience that Don Giulio* came off

* Baron Giulio Todeschi, whose life was printed at Casale in 1849.

victorious in the conflict, and he is not the only one who has had trouble of this kind. Therefore put away the useless thought of the past, and think only of serving God from this time forward, holding fast to these maxims :

1st. You must not expect to be impeccable nor wait to rejoice in the Lord till you are free from all sin. Our consolation and spiritual joy must be founded on God's mercy not on our own justice.

2nd. Form to yourself a great idea of the *goodness* of God ; remember that it is infinite and that our conception can never exceed the reality.

3rd. You must repose a boundless confidence in the goodness of God, and this confidence is not to be diminished even by your faults, for we must hold for certain that God is ready to forgive us not only seven times but seventy times seven.

4th. Pray for grace without measure or limit and await it in simple faith ; but do not seek to determine the time or manner of its bestowal.

5th. Believe that sorrow for sins consists in the firm *resolve* to avoid sin and to do all possible good, not in a *feeling* of dejection, sadness, melancholy or discouragement.

6th. Therefore, you should never be disquieted by your failings, but get rid of uneasiness and sadness by every means in your power, whether spiritual or merely human means, such as a moderate amount of innocent amusement, diverting the mind from gloomy thoughts, occupying yourself with less serious things, bright conversation and sympathy with the happiness of others, &c.

7th. Take cheerful subjects for your meditation, such as the goodness of God, the Resurrection, Heaven, the privileges of a Christian, the love of God and of Christ for man, &c.

By the bye, you say you want to make a retreat with a view to obtaining compunction for your sins ; but I want you to make it with a view to obtaining joy and cheerfulness. I therefore *forbid* you to meditate on the Eternal

Truths (except on Heaven) during the first week; and instead I *desire* you to fix your thoughts on the contemplation of consoling truths. I hope, indeed I have no doubt, that you will obey.

8th. Do not confound *venial* with *mortal* sins. From venial sins we can never be exempt as long as we live in this world; we can only comfort ourselves with the reflection that they do not deprive us of the grace of God and may be cancelled by means of the Holy Eucharist and in many other ways. Therefore a man should rejoice more at being in the grace of God, than he should grieve over venial sins, and he would prove ungrateful to God by not acknowledging His friendship.

9th. Do not be *obstinate* in your own views about yourself, but place yourself and all that is yours in the hands of God. Be of good courage! May God enable you to understand thoroughly and practise these truths!

A. R.

CXVII.

TO THE SAME AT OSCOTT.

Unbounded confidence in God is the remedy for spiritual sadness.

Stresa,

May 26th, 1843.

Those words in your letter : "since God has deprived me of all gladness, I am much afraid that I am not in a state of grace," contain the root of the evil. Does this seem to you a sound argument : "I am afraid I am not in the grace of God because I am no longer cheerful ?" It is merely a sophism of the devil, the very one by which he deceived or tried to deceive Don Giulio. By means, however, of deep humility and perfect obedience Don Giulio overcame the temptation. We must not *expect* that God should give us gladness, as if we had a right to it. No, we must be quite ready to accept aridity, sadness, darkness, without drawing the conclusion that we are not in the grace of God.

Can we be absolutely certain that we are in a state of grace ? No man on earth, as you know very well, can be certain of this, without a special revelation. What then ? Are we to torment ourselves about it ? No, but we must cease once for all to have confidence in ourselves and in our own justice, and we must place ourselves entirely and peacefully in the most loving hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying to Him with perfect contentment : "my lot is in Thy hands." Far from us be it to imitate those of whom St. Paul speaks, "men who know not the justice of God and seek to set up their own justice." What is the justice of God if not His mercy ? It is that justice which He bestows upon man out of pure mercy, which St. Paul calls

the *justice of faith*, because it is the outcome of faith, of the full trust and confidence which a man reposes in the goodness and faithfulness of God. This "justice of God," which man acquires by that perfect confidence "which confoundeth not," is contrasted by St. Paul with the "justice of man," which he also calls the "justice of works," wishing us not to trust to this, in order that God alone may be glorified. Throughout the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle seeks to impress on us that we must not expect to be free from defects (and the same truth is expressed in those other words of Scripture: "be not righteous over-much"), but that we must be fully persuaded that we remain always sinners, for we *actually* commit venial sins and we are *capable* of committing any kind of enormity. At the same time the Apostle would have us believe ourselves "just in Christ," that is: hoping in His mercy, in the efficacy of His merits, and through faith in His Sacraments.

If we are conscious of sin let us have recourse with confidence to the Sacrament of Penance; if we are not conscious to ourselves of anything let us still hold fast to our confidence in the Divine Goodness, in the certainty that it will never fail those who trust in it, even though they be sinful and imperfect. Herein consists the "glory of the grace" of Jesus Christ, that it freely takes away our sins and justifies us by faith quickened by charity, whereas we cannot be justified by works alone. You must distinguish between the *feeling of sadness* and the *fear of not being in the grace of God*. Your fault is the latter, not the former. Try to banish the feeling of sadness but do not take it for granted that you will succeed; if you do not succeed you must endure it calmly and patiently as you would any other tribulation. But as for the *disquieting fear of not being in the grace of God*, this you must regard as an enemy, a trick of the devil, a fault due to self-love and springing from want of faith in the goodness of Jesus Christ. Cost what it may you must rout the enemy; never yield the consent of your will, and detest the temptation all the

more when it presents itself *subspecie boni*, as though it were a sentiment of humility. This is a dangerous wile of the enemy. He would make us believe that interior self-abasement is an act of piety, but there is a self-abasement that is evil, the effect of little faith and the cause of great dejection. True humility knows how to "glory in the Lord," considering its own infirmity as a continual trophy of the glory of Jesus Christ: it makes a man abide in Christ as a branch in the vine, and cling to Him as a child to its mother. I will therefore say to you in the words of St. Augustine: "We are sailing across a lake so to say, amid wind and tempest: our ship is almost filled through the daily temptations of this life. And whence comes it, but because Jesus is asleep? If Jesus were not asleep within thee, thou wouldst not be exposed to these storms; but thou wouldst have calm within, through Jesus watching with thee. But what is 'Jesus sleepeth'? Thy faith which is of Jesus hath fallen asleep." (Enar. in Ps. xxv). Consider the last sentence: arouse your faith in God's *goodness*. It is impossible for one who knows how good God is to be oppressed by the fear of not being in a state of grace; for it is the prerogative of His goodness to raise all those that hope in Him from the state of sin to that of grace. "I knew all this long ago," you will perhaps say to yourself, "and Father General might spare himself the trouble of teaching me." Do not say so: receive Father General's instructions with humility and docility as though you were an ignorant person; reflect upon it as though you had never heard of such things before. If you do this, and pray at the same time, you will recover your former liberty of spirit, and you will learn how to bear that sadness which we cannot drive away and yet cannot condemn as voluntary. Adieu.

A. R.

CXVIII.

TO GIUSEPPE ZAIOTTI AT STRESA.

On preparation for the religious vows.

Milan,

August 8th, 1843.

I wished to speak to you before leaving Stresa, but there was no time ; so I will now say by letter what I could not say by word of mouth. My dear Brother in Christ, a great day in your life is now drawing near, the day on which you are to bind yourself more closely to the service of our Lord by means of the holy Vows. This great day will see the fulfilment of your desires, for you will then enter a new state of life, which has been compared by the Fathers to the Land of Promise and an earthly Paradise. Endeavour then to appreciate the greatness of our Lord's gift ; pour out your soul before our Lord with hymns and canticles of thanksgiving, loving aspirations, generous resolutions and fervent promises. You will spend an entire month in retreat before your Profession. Let this be for you an "acceptable time," the day of propitiation and salvation ; invite our Lord to come and dwell in your soul for ever ; and for this purpose you must cleanse this dwelling place of your Divine Guest from all defilement and adorn it with ornaments of virtue the most precious that you can find to offer Him. Above all try to imitate His example, imitate Him in His infancy and poverty in the stable of Bethlehem, in the labours and patience of His evangelical ministry, in His life-long mortification and His sacrifice on the cross. Let Jesus on the cross be your model, your mirror. Meditation, love, prayer are the means by which

you may imitate Him and reproduce His image in yourself. All comes from Him, from His loving heart, ever open to us as a living fountain of grace; it rests with us to draw therefrom the waters of life. We want energy, together with great confidence and constancy. Let not our courage fail, for Christ, its source and foundation, will never fail. Our sweet Mother Mary will assist us if we pray to her, and our Angels and Patron Saints in heaven will do the same. Courage then! It is in retreat that we must lay the foundation of sanctity. Take this thought with you into retreat that the vocation which God has bestowed on you is great, and calls for great things from you. And do not forget in your prayers your affectionate brother and father in Christ,

A. R.

CXIX.

TO CATARINA ROSMINI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

It is useful to experience the difficulties of the spiritual life.

Stresa,

October 20th, 1843.

My dear daughter in Christ,

I am glad to hear that, by the grace of God, you are beginning to overcome the repugnance you felt to a retired and hidden life, such as that of the Novitiate. This life is full of delight to one who appreciates heavenly things, but at the same time it is hard to flesh and blood, to self-love, to our passions. These, my dear Catarina, must be immolated on the altar of the Cross where your most loving and faithful Spouse laid down His life. He has chosen you as His companion in mortification and abnegation as well as in glory. How sweet is the company of

Jesus ! He will give us all the strength, all the grace we need, if only we ask Him.

It was a useful experience for you to encounter difficulties and hardships at first in the path of perfection. This experience is even necessary in order to correct the erroneous impressions we had formed in the world of what is implied in following Christ in the way of perfection. One is apt at first, to entertain fantastic notions of perfection and to forget that it implies the sacrifice of our own inclinations. Let us learn to know our own weakness, and the constant need we have of prayer that God may effect in us what we cannot do ourselves. In these trials and difficulties we must look with greater confidence than ever to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, and try to make our service the more joyful and loving when the enemy makes the path appear stony and long and the goal unattainable. The difficulties are not insuperable except to our own imagination ; indeed the path is easy to the lovers of Him who conquered the demons and who said : " Come to Me all ye that labour and are burdened and I will refresh you. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light."

I shall expect ever better news, my dear Catarina. If your holy resolutions are strengthened each day your confidence will increase, and with it the grace of God. May Jesus Christ be set like a seal upon your heart and your arm. Pray for your affectionate father in Christ.

A. R.

CXX.

TO THE SAME AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the grace and felicity of her vocation.

Stresa,

November 16th, 1843.

May God be praised who comes to the aid of His poor servants, giving them His hand and raising them as He did Saint Peter, provided that when they sink amid the waves they cry out with him: "Lord save us, we perish." Yes, you are happy, my dear daughter; and I am happier than ever to see you happy, though I had no doubts, for I saw well that you are not made for the things of earth but for heavenly things. I saw it was the will of God as Saint Paul says, that "your conversation should be in heaven." You must not think it will be always fair weather; there will be other winds, fresh tempests; but there will be no shipwreck, my dear Catarina, for the pilot of your barque is *Jesus Christ*, and you have only to trust yourself to Him. O happy necessity of abandonment to Jesus Christ! Even when He seems to sleep His heart is ever watching over you and all those who confide in Him.

I should like you and all my daughters in Christ to bear always in mind this great truth: that if you have perfect confidence in your Spouse Jesus Christ, you cannot fail to triumph securely over every foe and arrive at the highest perfection, or (which is the same thing), the greatest happiness. I say that *perfection* and *happiness* are one and the same thing. For what can the spouse of Christ desire save to be perfect in His eyes? What can be wanting to her if, through the grace of her Spouse, she becomes

perfect? What peace she will enjoy, what ineffable consolation, what courage and security in every encounter! Confidence then, ever and in all things! Confidence in the calm as in the storm, in sickness as in health, when things go well as when they go wrong: confidence in the temptations and trials to which our Lord subjects the soul He loves; then the victory is certain, for it is Jesus Christ Himself who will conquer in us. My dear daughter, see that you draw profit from the Novitiate, and spare no pains to become enamoured of poverty, self-contempt, zeal for the salvation of souls, obedience and submission of your understanding, and all the other virtues that form the spirit of the Institute you have embraced. Adieu! Pray for your father in Christ,

A. R.

CXXI.

TO SISTERS FRANCESCA PAREA AND ANASTASIA
SAMONINI AT LOUGHBOROUGH.

Stresa,

November 24th, 1843.

To my beloved daughters in Christ, the strength and consolation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be all honour and glory for ever.

May the Lord be praised who has brought you happily to the field of your labour; there, imitating our Lord in His mortification and apostolic ministry, you may co-operate in the salvation of many poor souls and thus save your own souls. Yes, my dear daughters, you could have found no better way of securing your eternal salvation than by being torn from your native land and transported to a distant country, differing in language and customs, engrossed by worldly interests, and severed

from the unity of the true Church. What a grace is this which God has conferred upon you! What a favour on the part of Jesus, your Spouse! Do you not owe him a singular gratitude for having chosen you two poor, inexperienced women to do so great a work for His glory? Heaven is now brought very near; if only you will have it, it is yours; you can become saints, and great saints, if you profit by this grand opportunity.

We have read your letters with consolation, especially the account of your journey, and have thanked God for it all. The protection He has afforded you until now is an earnest of what He will do in time to come for you, His servants, if you trust in Him alone, instead of thinking about your own weakness. It is certain that the graces you receive from God will be great and plentiful in proportion to your faith and confidence. Your own weakness, as I said, must not alarm you; you must look on it as the trophy of the glory of Jesus Christ, whose pleasure it is to effect His designs with worthless instruments. Courage then! Go on bravely, bearing this thought always in mind: if there is anything bad in you it comes from yourselves, if anything good it comes from God. Do not be surprised at your own weakness, for there is no evil of which you are not capable. On the other hand you must not be surprised at anything great or holy you may be enabled to do, for it is God who does it in you: to Jesus Christ alone belongs all the glory, and to you nothing but the confusion of being so graciously treated without any merit on your part.

Be careful not to judge over-harshly of the persons and things surrounding you: suspend your judgment lest you be tempted to judge rashly. At first one cannot understand the manners and customs of a new country; but after a time one learns to appreciate them better. Take no thought for the morrow, only trying to do all the good you can in the present. Be grateful and respectful towards your benefactress, to whom you have already presented and will now again present my respects. Apply

yourselves with great diligence to the study of the English language; and if you can render any assistance in the schools (under your superior's direction) do so, and show that you are ready to work. If Father Pagani thinks fit to employ you in the service of the sick, comply with all readiness. Remember you have been sent to England in order to exercise charity; and it is only by unwearied and generous charity that you will be able to make the Catholic religion known to souls lying in the darkness and shadow of death. The charity infused by our holy Religion into those who are faithful to its teaching, is the most luminous proof of its truth and one which is wont to convince the most obstinate opponents. Therefore Jesus Christ wished that the commandment of love which He spoke not to our ears, but to our hearts, should be the glorious and most precious badge of His disciples. I need not say that you must begin by mutual affection, for I doubt not that you live in perfect harmony, each supporting, sustaining and encouraging the other, in short that you are but one heart and one soul.

I pray God to bless you and remain your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CXXII.

TO ARNOLDO FEHR.

*On the principles by which zeal for the conversion of souls
should be directed.*

Stresa,

March 1st, 1844.

The desire that your fellow-countrymen, nay the whole world, be converted to the Faith, is good, provided it does not draw you away from holy obedience, which is something still better; provided it does not diminish that golden indifference, which seeks only what is pleasing to God, and in the manner pleasing to God; provided it does not cause disquietude and rob you of the energy which you ought to consecrate to God and to employ in the duties allotted to you, in order that you may secure your eternal salvation by fulfilling them with simplicity and thoroughly. Your desire, I repeat, is good if it is like the cherished longing of Moses for the liberation of his people. He besought the Lord to send Him who was to be sent, but in his profound humility he thought not of himself. Nay, when God chose him for the mission, he was filled with confusion and besought the Lord to dispense him from the arduous task on the plea that he was slow of speech and that he stuttered.

I gladly consent to ask for prayers for the conversion of Switzerland. We all can pray and at all times. Jesus Christ has taught us to do so: "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he send labourers into his harvest." Consider well these words, my dear Arnaldo, consider by whom they were spoken. Could not Jesus Christ send as many labourers as He chose into the harvest

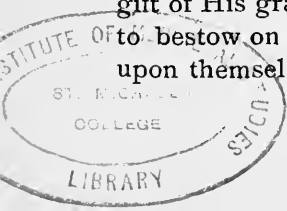
field? He could and yet He would not. He wished His disciples to obtain the mission by prayer, so intent was He on impressing upon His disciples the necessity of receiving a divine mission before preaching the Gospel. Christ Himself declared repeatedly that He had not come of Himself but was sent by His Heavenly Father. Without this mission it is vain to hope for any fruit from our labours. Woe to him who presumes to enter the field of his own accord! Far from doing good to others, he would work his own condemnation, because his mission would in no way resemble that of Christ. Indeed, a man of God does not even expect so exalted a mission; if it is given to him he trembles and finds it difficult to believe; the voice of obedience alone is able to reassure him; only when he is certain that it is God who sends him does he take courage and act, though always distrusting himself.

Now what shall I say to you, my dear Arnolfo, when you beg me to send evangelical labourers for the conversion of Switzerland? God knows how ardently I also desire the conversion of so many souls in error. But I can only say what Christ said to the Apostles: *Pray ye*, or rather I will say in the first person *Let us pray the Lord of the harvest*. Can we expect to say more or to do what our Lord did not do? "The disciple is not above his Master." Anything more that I could say would be temerity and arrogance and I should be deceiving you as well as myself. But if our heavenly Father hears your and our prayers and says to me as He said to the Apostles: "Separate me Saul and Barnabas;" if He makes known to me that some of our dear Brothers are destined for the great work—do you think I shall wait for your entreaties? No, my dear Arnolfo, I will not delay a single moment in obeying the Divine behests. But the times and the moments are in the hands of God, and no entreaties of yours addressed to me can hasten them. God is wont to send the preachers of the Gospel to the nations when He sees them to be ripe for receiving the message:

“Lift up your eyes and see the countries for they are white already to harvest” (John iv).

At the time of maturity Christ came. At the time of maturity America was discovered. Every nation enters the Church only when it is mature, and the appointed time, known to the infinite wisdom of God, is entirely hidden from men. Then and then only does He send his Apostles with efficacious graces for its conversion. One is called at the third hour, another at the sixth, one at the ninth, another at the eleventh. What presumption it would be for man, utterly ignorant as he is, to pretend to scrutinize the decrees of God and to determine the times and moments when the nations are ripe unto harvest ! Therefore, I repeat that you cannot hasten the happy day of the Divine harvest by addressing petitions to me, but you may hasten it by having recourse to our heavenly Father with profound humility and by the practice of every virtue, especially obedience and indifference.

I perceive from your letter, my dear brother, that you have not duly considered and do not fully realize how Divine is the work of conversion of souls. You say : “If it is God’s will that we should assist our neighbour in his temporal necessities when they come to our knowledge, how much more must this be the case with regard to his spiritual necessities.”—But do you not see that there is a very great difference between these two works ? The one has no need of a mission, the other has. We can accomplish the first with the means we have at our disposal ; our natural strength and abilities, our worldly substance, &c. But as for the second, nature supplies us with no means of accomplishing it, for it is not man’s work but the work of God. It is never man, but God alone who converts souls : man may work as much as he likes, he may preach till he is hoarse, but he will effect nothing unless God accompanies his words with the ineffable and gratuitous gift of His grace. This grace, however, He is not wont to bestow on the enterprises of those rash men who take upon themselves the office of preaching the Gospel and



believe themselves capable of converting the world with their knowledge, their eloquence and their false zeal. No, no, dear Arnaldo, do not think it is as easy to convert a soul as it is to bestow an alms, to minister to the sick, to console the afflicted. All good Christians can and should perform these holy works of mercy; they are proportioned to the strength of all men of good will. Not so with the Apostolic ministry, said by the Fathers to be *a burden formidable to the strength of Angels*, even when it is laid upon us by God Himself. How then can he fail to be overwhelmed and crushed by its weight, who dares unbidden to lay it on his shoulders? God grant that none of our dear Brothers and companions should be so ignorant of Divine things, or so proud as to indulge such foolish fancies, or to undertake such guilty enterprises!

So listen to me my dear son. Pray constantly to the Lord of the harvest that He send his labourers into Switzerland and throughout the world. But for the rest, refuse to admit into your heart any thought that disturbs your peace and tranquillity in the Lord: cut short all thoughts about the future: devote all your energies to the holy offices of charity entrusted to you by Providence. Try to derive from them the greatest possible amount of merit; fulfil them with the utmost perfection, internal and external, bearing patiently the sufferings and mortifications entailed by them, finding in these exercises your spiritual delight and consolation. Thank and praise God day and night for everything that befalls you, and commit your welfare to His most loving care. Say often to Him: "my lot is in Thy hands," and be persuaded that He loves you more than you do yourself and that His benignant Providence disposes every event great and small for our good; and therefore we can have no greater joy than that of knowing, loving and adoring this Divine Providence in every event, be it pleasing or displeasing to our natural inclinations.

A. R.

CXXIII.

TO FATHER GENTILI IN ENGLAND.

He reproves him for having opposed the plans of his Superior.

Oleggio,

April 13th, 1844.

I received your letter of the 3rd inst. in which for the relief of your conscience, you apprise me of what you have said and done relative to the mission at Birmingham, in order that I may give you a penance if I find you deserving of blame. Ah! my dear brother, indeed I have occasion to find fault with you, to my great grief and infinite sorrow. The substance of your letter is this, that for the good of the Institute in England you have managed to defeat the plan of a work already arranged by your Superior. Now pray tell me, do you perchance admit the principle that subordinates may bring about the failure of their Superior's concerted operations when they opine them to be injurious to the society to which they belong? If you reflect on this principle you must see that it contains the destruction of religious obedience, the only basis of true virtue, without which holiness becomes illusory and ungodly and there can be no well-grounded hope that the Lord will bless the Institute. Now tell me, have you not acted according to this destructive principle? How could your conscience suggest such a war against the work of your Superior?—You say it was to save the Institute from a misfortune that threatened it.—Had you the authority? Were you charged therewith by a legitimate commission from God? Why did you not hold firmly the principle of faith, that he who obeys does not err, and that he who submits, without leaving his own sphere, is assured

of God's assistance? Does not the Holy Ghost say, "the obedient man shall speak of victory"? How much greater good would you not have done the Institute by placing trust in obedience, a virtue so dear to our Lord, and by steadfastly believing that in this way God would not fail to reward you and bless the Institute, and draw good out of evil, even supposing the Superior had made a mistake? What a deplorable illusion!

But this is not all. In order to succeed in what was not your business, you were not satisfied with openly censuring your Superiors' judgment, you resorted to blame-worthy means of gaining your end, and complained of the conduct of your Superior to persons of importance, diminishing thereby his credit and authority, and making him appear to be a man of little prudence, whereas he is worthy of all esteem. Who would have thought Satan could have deluded you to such an extent *sub specie boni*? I deplore the real injury you have done to the Institute by your bad example; and I grieve that you have become the instrument of discord, when you ought to be the centre of union, the model of obedience, the bond of fraternal charity. Ah! my dear brother, open your eyes, recognize your great imprudence, see how you have violated the virtue and spirit of your vow. Ask therefore pardon of God and promise Him a true amendment. I have no desire to see you appear holy in the eyes of men, as this often imperils a man's eternal salvation, but rather to be truly a saint in the sight of God. But you will never attain to holiness, if you do not make it consist in a total abnegation of your own judgment and in perfect obedience to your Superiors.

Do then afford me the consolation of seeing you enter into yourself and draw profit from my words, as from a warning sent you by God by my means, unworthy as I am. Give me a promise in writing that you will never fall again into errors of a similar nature, that you will do nothing more unknown to or against the will of your Superiors, and that, to carry out your own views, you will

not rely for support on the influence of others outside the Institute. In fine, write to me in such a manner as to prove that your error, though serious was accidental and transitory. Renounce for ever your own will to follow the will of God; then shall I bless the Lord for having enlightened you, and entertain the hope of your being a worthy son of the Institute which has for its foundation "obedience unto death even the death of the cross."

A. R.

CXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

He accepts his repentance and avowal of his fault.

Stresa,

May 3rd, 1844.

Finding of the Holy Cross.

My dear companion in Christ,

"My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world."

Your dear letter has taken a heavy load off my heart. I was greatly distressed by what had happened, but I am now fully consoled. It is enough for me that you should recognize the absolute necessity of offering no opposition to Superiors when they have come to any decision, even though some evil result seems likely to accrue to the Institute. Indeed it is then more than ever that we have need of obedience, self denial and confidence, the virtues on which our Institute is based. I am satisfied with your acknowledgment of the deceit practised on you by the devil in this instance, and I am sure that the spirit of our Lord and the aid of our most loving Mother Mary will

forewarn and defend you in future from so pernicious a deception. Your promises are to me as sweet balsam. To hear that you are disposed to die rather than disobey is all that I can desire of you; but I certainly desire and expect nothing less. O blessed blindness of obedience! It is like the blindness of faith, indeed it is the *practical faith* of which Christ has said "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." O happy renunciation that draws down the blessing of God on our Institute, and even changes into good the evil that is inadvertently done by Superiors! "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." Yes, my dear brother, by this means we shall attain to the true justice and holiness which we desire. "The just man lives by faith." Therefore I embrace you tenderly in the charity of our Lord and thank you for the consolation afforded me. I do not require any further penance from you, for the heart-felt sentiments of your letter are worth more than any penance. I showed your letter to Fr. Provincial and he was also much pleased.

As for the request you make in concluding your letter, to be relieved of your heavy burden, you may be quite sure that I understand how grievous it must be to you, and I often feel compassion for you, knowing the labours that you have to sustain. But be patient yet a little while, and continue to work and to suffer joyfully for the love of your God, who bore the Cross for our sake. I hope to be able, sooner or later, to relieve you *in part*, and I will tell you how. I see the importance of setting apart certain persons exclusively for the work of giving Retreats and Missions, a work of great difficulty, and one that must be given to men who can entirely devote themselves to it, if it is to be done well. A suggestion to this effect was in fact made to me by some of our Fathers in England in the late reports. If a time should come when this idea can be realized, I may perhaps be able to relieve you of your present burden. Be of good courage therefore and wait as long as God pleases! We do all for God and we know for certain that God will do all for us. Only let us have an upright intention and

trample self-love under foot. Even when things go well we must sincerely seek contempt for ourselves which is what we deserve, and honour and glory for God alone as is His due. In order to do all this, let us put our trust in Mary, approaching her constantly with earnest supplication and "lips of praise." At the same time we must never be dejected on account of our faults, because we have a merciful Lord who always can and will cleanse us from them, whatever they may be, if only we pray. We may say to Him with loving confidence: "a contrite and humbled heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise."

Adieu! I have no time for more. May God bless you all, and grant that you be "one heart and one soul."

A. R.

CXXV.

TO GIUSEPPE SAIANI AT ROME.

He urges him to correspond generously with his vocation.

Stresa,

June 5th, 1844.

I was pleased to receive your letter, which I had indeed been expecting a long time, as I thought it impossible you could have forgotten me. I was glad to have an account of your occupations, and to hear that occasions of merit are not wanting, though your health continues to improve. As a matter of fact, when I chose you from among so many others as a companion to your dear Father Rector, whilst you were still only a novice (a thing quite exceptional) I meant to give you an opportunity of acquiring both merit and knowledge, with benefit also (should it please God) to your health. May God bless you then and make you a saint, according to the vocation to which in His Mercy He

has called you ! It now remains with you to cultivate this great gift with generosity and gratitude.

What you tell me about " your feeling so weak in spirit as to allow yourself to be dejected by trifles," will do you no harm if you learn thereby your own nothingness and increase your confidence in God. All our weaknesses if they serve to *humble* and not to *discourage* us become good and useful through the mercy of the Lord, who succours the humble and contrite of heart, for these are convinced of their own incapacity for good and seek always to be humbled, having recourse to Him by prayer, a prayer that is affectionate, filial and generous. Courage then and confidence in the Lord ! Be faithful to His inspirations, and constant in the good work you have begun and never let your will consent to temptation. Your spirit will thus become strong ; you will realize every day more clearly how sweet and safe it is to live trusting oneself to Divine Providence with that golden indifference, which is the characteristic of sanctity and the love of God. I should like you to tell me of your spiritual progress for this is the chief thing that consoles me in my dear brothers and children : " I have no greater grace than this."

Be careful not to lose your fervour amid the distractions of a great city ; keep guard over the gates of your senses and let your heart be hidden in your God to whom you are already bound by vow. In fine, act in such a way that my intentions in sending you to Rome may be fulfilled, and that I may have you on your return better, more perfect, stronger in your vocation than when I sent you away. For this I daily pray for you and all those who are one heart and one soul with me. When you write of these things, give me full information. Remember me to Father Rector, whose precious health is confided to your care. All your dear companions in the Novitiate, as well as Father Master and the other fathers return your greetings. Adieu !

A. R.

CXXVI.

TO SISTER PLACIDA RUFFINACCIA AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He reproves her for attaching undue importance to the affection of her Sisters.

Stresa,

August 15th, 1844.

My dear daughter,

Your first letter distressed me greatly, but the second has consoled me. Is it possible that you allow yourself to be thus swayed by your imagination, and that you cannot remain firm in the holy purpose of serving God, of living and dying for His love as your holy vocation requires of you? What pitiable weakness is this! Fancy making your constancy in your vocation depend upon the love or coldness of your companions! Did you then enter the Convent, did you consecrate yourself to God in the religious state in order to be loved by your Sisters, and not rather to love and serve Jesus Christ? What false notions these are of yours! To persuade ourselves that we are not loved or appreciated or respected, to believe all these things with no foundation as you do, to conjure up these fancies for every trifle: what is all this but a clear sign of a morbidly sensitive self-love? And yet all virtue, and especially the virtue required by our religious Profession consists in renouncing self-love and being content with everything, correction especially, in fulfilling our duties with simplicity and equability of temper, in supporting our neighbour's importunities for the love of our Spouse Jesus Christ, without ever on our part giving trouble to any one! For the love of God, make these sentiments your own and acquire a sound judgment based on humility, on patience and perseverance. Otherwise you will end by becoming a cross to yourself as well as to others. Well now, let us thank God and our Lady for the change in your dispositions, and let us hope it will be lasting. Pray for your father in Christ,

A. R.

CXXVII.

TO CATARINA ROSMINI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He explains the signification of the religious habit.

Stresa,

December 8th, 1844.

My dear daughter in Christ,

I share in your joy at having laid aside the garb of the world and clad yourself in the royal attire of a Spouse of Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What cause have you not for holy joy! Now you will bear about with you a constant reminder of what you should be within, for "all the beauty of the King's daughter is within." See how well your habit symbolises the soul within. The white veil, covering your head and descending to the breast and shoulders denotes purity of thought and affections. The black dress signifies the mortification which must clothe the Spouse of Christ in all her faculties, and her death to all earthly things, since black is the colour of death. The cross on your breast indicates that your Crucified Spouse must dwell in your heart, according to the words of the Canticle: "My Beloved shall dwell in the midst of my heart." And the Cross is of wood to remind you that you must seek our Lord and cling to Him in His poverty and on the Cross of wood, not of gold or silver, on which He died. With this sign of the Cross you will vanquish all your foes. Have no fear of them: even if they annoy you they can do no harm. Bad and importunate thoughts are permitted by God in order to make trial of our fidelity and love. We must fight against them with the arms of faith, but always with tranquillity and confidence in the Lord.

My dear daughter, pray for me. I cannot stay with you any longer, much as I should wish to do so. Adieu!

Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CXXVIII.

TO GIACOMO LUGAN AT INTRA.

He praises him for zeal in the education of poor children.

Stresa, 1845.

I answered your good wishes for Christmastide with my heart if not by letter, knowing that was what you would like best. However, now that I have a free moment I take up my pen to tell you how pleased I am with your progress, not that you may get vain and take all the credit to yourself, but that you may ascribe it all to God, recognizing Him as the Author and Source of all good and yourself as the author and source of all that is evil in you. Thus will you be led to love and glorify Him more and more, whilst at the same time you humble yourself the more deeply. I am glad to see you labouring earnestly in the holy ministry of charity entrusted to you; I am glad to find you appreciate the excellence of this work (and this also is a light from God), and that you are burning with zeal for the instruction and education of these souls in whom you serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Strive with all your might, not only to labour as a faithful servant and true child of the Institute, but also to animate your companions to the same ardour. May God bless you all!

Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CXXIX.

TO SISTER COSTANTINA MENZIO AT DOMODOSSOLA

On confidence in God and the practice of solid virtue.

Stresa,

January 21st, 1845.

Continue to follow the advice which has been given you and put your trust in God. You may rest assured that He will not forsake you, He will not and cannot forsake you. Listen to what St. John says :

“If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” Ponder on these words and you will find them full of consolation.

Make frequent protestations that you would rather die a thousand times than offend your God, to whom you will certainly be united for all eternity. Humility, confidence, purity of intention and tender devotion to the most pure Heart of Mary ! Your Father in Christ blesses you !

A. R.

CXXX.

TO FATHER GENTILI IN ENGLAND.

He urges him to draw motives of confidence rather than discouragement from correction.

Stresa,

January 30th, 1845.

Beloved brother in Christ,

I gather from your letter that the devil has raised a great commotion in your heart, but I have confidence in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I pray for you without ceasing, that you may never allow the enemy to prevail. Now turn a deaf ear to the voice of passion, and listen calmly to what your Superior is about to say with all affection.

You say that for the space of ten years you have received from your Superiors nothing but reproofs and censure for all you have done. But reflect a little on this matter in the presence of God who is the Eternal Truth. Is this really the case? You have only to read my letters over again to see how frequently I have expressed my joy in the Lord on hearing of the many good works you have accomplished for the glory of God. But I have also reproved you and blamed your conduct when in the sight of God I deemed it my duty to do so. Yes, this is quite true; but even then I acted with all charity and gentleness towards you following the dictates of my heart, though you seem to ignore my affection. And then, is it possible that the devil avails himself of this pretext to cheat and disturb you? Is it possible that you are so much distressed as to say you are weary of life? Alas! What have we come to, my dear brother in Jesus Christ? The very beginners in the spiritual life know that reproofs from Superiors are to be received gladly, as acts of

true charity and most precious gifts, and they acknowledge them as fresh motives of gratitude and affection towards their Superiors. May I not expect as much from you who have served God for so many years, and have offered Him the sacrifice of your self-love and your own will by the vow of religious obedience? Yes, this is what I have expected and do still expect of you. I expect you with the assistance of the powerful grace of Jesus Christ and the intercession of our dear Lady and Mother to humble and mortify your self-love. This it is, and this alone, that robs you of the sweetness of Divine love and instils that bitterness which, you say, makes life a burden, diminishing even the love for your Superiors and brethren which should increase each day. This is the greatest of your tribulations: this alone is to be feared; but where does it come from if not from yourself or at least from the Tempter, the enemy of humility and peace? Certainly it is so grievous as to be more insupportable than all the tribulations endured by the Apostle. Be humble therefore, and the temptation will vanish: what was a crushing burden will become a consolation and a joy. For in truth a spiritual man has no greater comfort than that of knowing that he has Superiors who reprove and admonish him for his faults, so that he is able to walk securely in the way of the Lord and, holding fast by the anchor of obedience, to reach the haven of salvation. But in order to effect this, it is necessary to give up our own plans as soon as ever they are found to be in opposition to those of Superiors, to give up our own way of thinking and our own will, taking the judgment of Superiors as the rule of our conduct, in simplicity and purity of heart.

With regard to the Missions and Retreats, Fr. Provincial and I are so far from disapproving of them that on the contrary we are greatly pleased at seeing the good beginning that has been made in this direction, and we hope that these labours of yours will become more and more fruitful, provided you are on your guard against the poisoned sweetness of praise and popular applause. Ah, my dear

brother, let the corrections and disapprobation of your Superiors be sweeter to you than the praises of other men. It was so with the Saints; they loved to be corrected and hated to be praised. But the man who does not love correction will never dislike praise.

You wish to become a Saint: you have often told me so and I believe you. Well then, keep to the pathway of the Saints; there is but one and you will never find another. This one way is that of perfect renunciation, perfect obedience, mortification of the *razionale* as St. Philip used to say: it consists in accepting cheerfully the arrangements made by Superiors; in expressing gratitude for their disapprobation and deriving encouragement (not dejection or sadness) from their admonitions; in banishing from our minds all schemes contrary to their wishes, as tares sown by the enemy; in rejoicing when the plans of Superiors succeed and exerting ourselves to the utmost to make them succeed, whilst we confine our own activity to the sphere of action assigned us, growing stronger day by day in charity and love for our vocation and our Institute. This is the way, the only way to attain sanctity. All other ways are false and illusive and lead to the loss, not only of sanctity, but of the soul itself.

My dear brother, "there is a way which seemeth to a man right, but the end thereof leadeth to death." My dearest brother, you say you are sad. I too am sad, more deeply grieved than you can be. You are sad because you are reproved and blamed for your faults; I am grieved to think you are pained by what should be an occasion of spiritual joy and consolation. Drive away your grief, and mine will likewise vanish, nay, it will be changed into joy. I hope you will do so, I should be sorry for you if I could not hope this of you. I trust that you will learn once for all to acknowledge your own error and the wisdom of Jesus Christ; and I hope that these joyful tidings will be conveyed by your next letter and never again be contradicted.

Adieu! Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CXXXI.

TO A CLERIC N. N.

He declares that he must overcome his pride or leave the Institute.

Stresa,

February 5th, 1845.

My dear son in Christ,

The Institute whose child you are, through the loving-kindness of God, sets no value on anything except *charity* and *humility*, for it is in these virtues that sanctity consists, according to the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Charity and humility should not be empty words; they must transform our soul and make it all gentleness and love, taking from it all bitterness and venom of pride, and the soul thus happily changed must show forth in all her actions those two virtues of charity and humility. As all our dear brothers are bound to endeavour earnestly to practise these virtues, so also it is a duty for Superiors to aid them to the utmost of their power. One of the means adapted to this end is that Superiors should know the faults of their brothers, who on their part should wish to be thoroughly known and to be set right. If this sincere good-will be wanting, they are not living up to their vocation, they are hypocrites, deceiving themselves and others, since they promise to keep our rules and then break their word.

In this spirit, I have bidden your immediate Superior keep me informed concerning the progress made by our dear scholastics, especially in goodness of heart, in charity, in humility, in the true spirit of God and in the observance of our holy Rules. I have also desired him to

inform me of all the external faults committed against these virtues, which were taught by Jesus Christ and form the ultimate end of our Institute. Your kind Superior was therefore obliged in conscience to manifest your imperfections, weaknesses and faults, but he did so in the spirit of charity and for your own good. What is it I hear? What is it that so deeply grieves me? They tell me that you have shown yourself dissatisfied because to your great humiliation you have only received the tonsure, that you have even refused to wear it, as also to serve in Church several times, saying that as you have not the advantage of the Minor Orders you should not be put to the inconvenience of exercising their functions. It thus appears that you consider it merely an inconvenience to serve in Church, whereas if you had the faintest notion of the majesty of God's Temple or a spark of zeal for His service, you would deem such an occupation to be your highest glory and delight in the Lord. What are these sentiments, my dear son? They are worldly sentiments, neither Catholic nor religious, they come from the devil, the Father of pride, by whom you unhappily allow yourself to be deceived. Such sentiments are directly opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ and of the Institute whose child you are, though without profit to yourself.

You have now passed several years in the Institute, during which you have heard these truths inculcated by your Superiors, but instead of applying your mind to them, instead of being grateful for the affection of your Superiors, your thoughts are busy with other things. Your mind runs on other things; you dislike correction; you return hatred for love; you deceive us and requite our kindness by ingratitude; and you coil yourself round within yourself like the adder, that will not listen to the voice of the enchanter, to quote the words of Holy Scripture.

No, my dear brother, I cannot tolerate this hardness of heart, this blinding pride. Over and over again have I told you the truth; you have received so many instructions that you cannot say that the truth has been concealed from

you. We tried to win you by kindness, then by a little severity, that so you might open your eyes to your real condition, but in vain. You will not understand. You trust in yourself and listen to your own fancy instead of to the voice of God, speaking to you by means of your superiors. You will not only lose your vocation by persisting in your unconquerable pride and obstinacy, but you will suffer shipwreck of your soul. You might take notice of the good example of humility and charity shown you by your companions; you might imitate them if you wished; but no, you prefer your false and conceited notion; and therefore you will have to render account to God for all the graces that you have wasted and turned to your own condemnation.

My dear brother, we have had enough of this. You must either go or else begin to live as a true child of the Institute. It is impossible to remain in the Institute with those sentiments of pride which are corrupting your heart and cause you to give so much scandal to your companions. Whilst you are animated by these sentiments you cannot love the Institute: it must of necessity become hateful to you. But if you had, on the contrary, the spirit of humility and charity and would but overcome yourself and listen to superiors, then you would love the Institute more and more every day, it would be for you an earthly Paradise, aye dearer than life itself. This is what so many others are doing; their love for their holy vocation increases from day to day, whilst yours must needs grow colder every day.

When the love of one's vocation does not increase day by day, it is a sign that one does not derive spiritual benefit from the teaching one receives and from the practices of piety. Choose then between the good spirit which is the spirit of God, and the evil spirit which is that of the devil, for no man can serve two masters. Adieu!

A. R.

CXXXII.

TO THE SAME.

On the same subject.

Stresa,

February 14th, 1845.

The Institute of Charity has need of men who are humble and meek, true disciples of Jesus Christ; and it was founded on purpose to form such men. During the last five years this truth has been constantly set before you, but as yet you give not a sign of even beginning to understand it, and you show no real desire to dedicate yourself to the great work of the Saints. Always swayed by your imagination, presumptuous and thinking about converting other people instead of changing your own life, you are a source of grief to your superiors and a scandal to the brothers; and then you are ungrateful enough to impute to ill-will what is simply done out of charity. In fact, if you do not renounce yourself once for all and begin to take a *real pleasure* in the practice of humility you will lose your vocation. A man who is haughty and full of himself can be of no service for the ministry of the Gospel and for the Institute: he finds everything unbearable. His heart becomes daily more bitter, selfish and ungrateful. Those members of the Institute whose only aim is to sanctify their souls by self-abnegation according to the teaching and example of Christ, become daily more attached to the Institute and to the superiors who manifest so much solicitude for their welfare. Those, on the contrary, who are full of themselves and of perverse and worldly notions, lose day by day their affection for the Institute, and for their superiors, because they must inevitably come into conflict with them,

and they invariably leave the Institute in the end. The symptoms you betray of an ill-regulated mind, and the little heed you pay to the fulfilment of your vow of obedience and of the promise made over and over again since first you entered the Institute and heard the explanation of the *Memorial*, are indeed deplorable.

You speak of the *distractions in our home life*. It is easy enough to see that if you know little of family life in the world, you know less of home life in the cloister, for these *distractions* are needful and indispensable for the formation and trial of true virtue.

You say you do not wish to wear the tonsure or serve in church, and you appeal to me as if I am to be the judge of your obstinacy, almost as if you had not a superior on the spot to whom you owe obedience, and as though it were necessary to have recourse to Father General to find out whether a subject must obey his Superior. Apart from this, your behaviour shows an ill-regulated mind, a proud and ungrateful spirit.

You say you are naturally *outspoken*, but frankness is one thing and *sincerity* another. When you pretended to be quite content with having only received the tonsure and thanked me effusively in your letter, where was your sincerity? Deeply wounded pride was lurking in your heart.

In short, up to the present you have understood nothing of what we have tried to teach you. Your thoughts are always busy elsewhere, they are never fixed on the one and only object which the Institute has in view, comprised in those words of Jesus Christ: "Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart. This is My commandment that you love one another. He that will come after Me let him deny himself." You reply proudly that you know all these things. No, my dear brother, you do not, you are blinded, you cannot know them. To speak of these truths, to chatter about them is not sufficient, we much *relish* them, we must be enlightened by Jesus Christ. This light you have not yet received, for all those who possess it give testimony to it by their

deeds, whereas you give proof of being led by the dim, flickering light of your own imagination.

My dear brother, I will give you another chance; but I warn you that if you do not pray earnestly for light to know yourself and to understand wherein consists the *only* good of the religious state by you embraced, and if you do not make up your mind once for all to be *obedient* to your immediate Superior, docile and diligent in keeping your rules, we shall effect nothing, things will go from bad to worse, and you will become more and more guilty every day in the sight of God and an object of abhorrence to us all. Pray, but pray earnestly and with a view to obtaining from God your own *sanctification*: this is what you need. It would seem that hitherto you have thought but little of your own soul, but unless you are thoroughly acquainted with and deeply persuaded of your faults and shortcomings, you will never be able to have contrition and amendment. Unless your heart becomes humble, there is no hope for you.

May God bless and enlighten you! This is my unceasing prayer in your behalf.

A. R.

CXXXIII.

TO THE SCHOLASTICS STUDYING PHILOSOPHY AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

On the love of and correspondence with their vocation.

Stresa,

March 8th, 1845.

My dear sons in Christ,

Although I have not always time to answer your letters, still I should wish to do so, and when I cannot, you will at least have the satisfaction of knowing that your letters are always welcome, especially when glowing with the love of your vocation. I hope that you will all become enamoured of your holy calling, and that day by day you will receive greater light from God to know the greatness of the favour He has bestowed on you, in taking you away from the world in order that you may consecrate yourselves to Him alone and become victims of that universal charity which He has taught by His words, by His life and by His death. God grant that none of you may remain behind, but that each and every one be zealous for the better gifts, striving hard to overcome and give up himself, overthrowing the obstacles which the flesh and self-love oppose to the perfect charity of Christ. This charity should be the life of all your thoughts, the soul of every action. It will teach you to be exact and diligent in the perfect observance of the rules and to draw profit from your meditations and other practices of piety, the delight of fervent souls; it will render you very obedient, indeed it will enable you to find great pleasure in obeying, in submitting, and in accepting every kind of humiliation and self-abasement. And whilst charity unites you closely

to your Superiors, towards whom you should show the greatest confidence and love, it will also unite you among yourselves in that intimate friendship which makes the disciples in the school of Christ one heart and one soul.

How beautiful a thing it is, my dear sons, to correspond generously to that vocation of love wherewith Christ calls you to His institute! What a glorious vocation it is that requires nothing else of us than love! If only you love, you are true members, perfect members of the Institute. It is for love's sake you must work, for love you must speak and for love be silent, study for love and suffer for love, and I do not say rejoice for love, since love itself turns all to joy that is done for love's sake. You, who are Scholastics ought especially to study for love, for the love of God and of His most holy will and of that wisdom which is God Himself; and also for the love of our neighbour, because the Institute wishes its members to love God in their neighbour with unbounded affection, and has for its foundation and its motto the precept of Jesus Christ: "This is My commandment, that you love one another," and "By this shall all men know that you are My disciple if you have love one for another." For our school is the school of Christ; our profession is that of disciples of Christ: our occupation consists in fulfilling the precept of Christ, and this is our only task. The Institute, therefore, sets store by talent, ability, and all natural endowments and knowledge; it desires its members to amass with great diligence and industry an abundant store of knowledge under the guidance of obedience, because talent, abilities and knowledge, though it be merely human, are means of doing good to our neighbour and especially to souls, when charity directs and animates all that we do.

This sublime vocation must be founded in deep humility, whereby a man refers all that is good in him to God and all the evil to himself, distrusts his own thoughts and judgments and the sincerity of his own heart, and shows this wholesome diffidence of self in that modesty of word and act, which makes a man lovable to his fellow men and

just in the sight of God. This humility excludes all rivalry, and gladly acknowledges the superiority of others; the humble man is ever disposed to deem himself the last and the servant of all,

May God bless you abundantly and grant you these virtues, which are all included in the grace of vocation!

A. R.

CXXXIV.

TO DON GENTILI AT LOUGHBOROUGH.

On the work of the Missions. He recommends prudence and humility.

Stresa,

April 10th, 1845.

Beloved brother in Christ,

I read your last letter with no little joy in the Lord, though I had previously seen the articles in the *Tablet*. I am deeply convinced of the importance of Mission work in England, and, for my part, promise to second your efforts to the utmost of my power. But we must always bear in mind these two maxims of the Institute:

1st. We should endeavour to do *well* whatever we undertake, doing full justice to the works assumed in order to keep our conscience free from neglect of duty.

2nd. We must be careful not to undertake *burdens* beyond our strength, because if we do we can neither perform our duty properly, nor attain perfection ourselves, nor preserve our spirit.

Father Provincial is also of my opinion. So you will perceive that the moment has not yet come for undertaking the missions offered us by our good Mr. Phillips. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest." If labourers come into the vineyard, we will comply with all our hearts. Judging

by the signs given us by Divine Providence, we shall no longer be in such small numbers a few years hence, if we go on prudently for the present not undertaking too much through inordinate zeal. Let us go on with the work of the Missions, which God will bless if our intention be upright. Let us be in no hurry to make our Institute *famous*; no, for Heaven's sake! if notoriety come to us, let it not be of our seeking; let us trust in God and serve Him with great humility and peace, lest the spirit of the world enter into our works; let us beware of worldly maxims, "beware of men." People often have their prejudices; but we need not be guided by them: God is our hope as He is our inheritance. If I could come to England, I daresay I should learn a great deal in many ways; but at present it does not seem to enter into the designs of God. The accurate and faithful accounts of my dear brothers will supply for my inexperience.

You will soon have Father Provincial back, and it will be a comfort to you all: a loss only to me; but I must have patience!

I was glad to hear you had written to Mgr. Wiseman, and also that our Lord grants you to feel deeply your own nothingness. After all, what is man that he should take any credit to himself? What folly! I pray always for you and you will pray for me, and so shall we often meet before the throne of the most High.

Your brother in Christ,

A. R.

CXXXV.

TO THE CLERIC, FIORENZO FORZANI AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

*He urges him to draw profit from the admonitions of
Superiors.*

Stresa,
April 23rd, 1845

Dear brother in Christ,

I should like to comfort you in your troubles and strengthen you in your weakness, but how can I do so save by referring you to the source of all consolation and strength, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, we must keep our eyes fixed on Him if we want to stand firm, for when we turn away our eyes from our Divine Master we fall at once. The whole study of perfection consists in keeping our thoughts and affections on what is eternal; if we fix them on transitory things our resolutions can have no consistency. If we concentrate our whole mind on what is eternal, is it possible that temporal events, passing accidents, can make us deviate from the right path, embarrass or discourage us? A reproof, a punishment, a humiliation is but momentary and temporal, even if it were unjust! How can we be arrested in our course and disturbed by what is a mere nothing in comparison with the good we are seeking, for it is a temporal thing compared with our aim, which is eternal? The perfection of our soul, indeed, is truly *eternal*, because it is the effect of our virtue and Divine grace, which is eternal and infinite. If we are not able to support mortification, and to draw profit from humiliation, the loss is all our own. It is our own soul that we place in jeopardy,

depriving it of the virtue which it might have, and possibly, has already acquired.

On the other hand, remember, dear Fiorenzo, that one of the most favourable dispositions for advancing in perfection is to lay great stress even on small failings. When a soul is convinced that every defect in the moral order is greater than any physical evil, then she never thinks herself sufficiently punished or humbled even for small faults. This sentiment, as great as it is noble, has always been conspicuous in the Saints. And I am convinced that no one will ever become a Saint who is not sincerely desirous of being punished even for slight faults, who is not insatiable of humiliation, faithful in co-operating with Divine justice by receiving with great relish and interior approval the penances and blame incurred even by slight faults. Ah! If we had but a little spiritual light what little account we should make of humiliation! How much greater our demerit would seem than the penance imposed on us! It is only when the soul understands this that it becomes generous. How I wish it were the case with you, dear Fiorenzo!

Again, why should we notice the severe aspect of our Superiors when we might think of their kindness, their zeal in our behalf? What do Superiors do, what do they seek but our good, our perfection? Why should we look only at appearances, and instead of corresponding with gratitude and love to their severity which springs from love, let our hearts grow cold through the very thing that, were we but just, would inflame them? I hope, dear Brother, that you will realize the force of these remarks and write to tell me of the happy results.

May God bless you! Adieu!

Your Father in Christ,

A. R.

CXXXVI.

TO DON FRANCESCO PAOLI AT DOMODOSSOLA

Advice on the government of his Community.

Stresa,

April 29th, 1845.

I have received the report of your House and of our students. As to keeping a middle course between the lax and the rigorous, it is a good maxim but it is not enough. On careful consideration I should advise you as follows :

1. In dealing with your subjects, endeavour to avoid haste as also any abruptness. Speak and treat with them slowly, be very deliberate in giving your opinion, never refusing to descend to details, be patient in listening, and patient in answering. It is true that a great deal of time goes in this way : but it is time well-spent, because this is an excellent means of winning the affections and confidence of subjects, the *first thing* which a Superior must seek in his government.

2. Endeavour to speak always with candour and loyalty. Sometimes one may be silent for a long time through prudence, and then suddenly break out in some bitter reproach or curt remark, and this is a great mistake, which does harm instead of good. Subjects should never be aware of any sudden change in the conduct of their Superiors, such as from saying too little to speaking too strongly.

3. Try to maintain an even humour, to be quiet, calm, and patient, even when you are very busy as also when you are interrupted or taken unawares.

4. Be careful not to let it appear that your answers

and decisions are given lightly or without due reflection, for nothing impresses a subject so favourably as to see that a Superior does not think and act lightly, but with deliberation and reflection, so that what has been once arranged is not lightly altered.

A. R.

CXXXVII.

TO DON GENTILI AT LOUGHBOROUGH.

He recommends prudence and obedience in well doing and speaks of his relations with England.

Stresa,

April 30th, 1845.

My dear brother in Christ,

In your last letter you again urge me to pay a visit to England. I am convinced of the truth of what you say, but at present I cannot come. As long as our Lord does not put it in my power, or move me strongly in the matter, we must trust in Him alone and hope that He will give to us all necessary light in this matter as in all others. We must have confidence in God! Those confide in Him who confide in the obedience of their Superior, and allow themselves to be guided with lively faith. Father Provincial will be starting in a few days time; he will soon be with you and he is worth a great deal more than I am. He will be the mouthpiece of the Divine will for you all and the instrument of your eternal salvation.

I never act on my own responsibility where the English Province is concerned, but listen with great pleasure to the information and counsel given me by my brothers. When once however, acting on their counsel, I have come to some determination, I expect humble

submission from all, and that perfection of obedience, without arbitrary interpretations, which alone can obtain copious and lasting benediction from our Lord. I am most desirous of promoting the work of the Missions, which do so much good, and I have great confidence in your zeal. At the same time it behoves me to proceed not as one who wishes to please men, but always in accordance with the solid and unchangeable maxims of the Gospel, and in particular, with the principle of fulfilling one's duty and complying with the obligations incurred. It was thus our Lord acted, who was faithful in all the duties of a good Israelite "that he might fulfil all justice." I pray God with all my heart that whilst He blesses your labours for His glory He may keep you "under the shadow of His wings," lest perchance your heart should become inflated with pride, or vainglory diminish your merit; and I trust that God will give you this grace. He will give you likewise that great light of the Saints, by which you will see and understand that an act of simple obedience is worth more than the conversion of all England. And I feel sure that you will imitate the obedience of St. Francis Xavier and of all the Saints, and that you will not reason with the tempter, for the devil is always leading men astray by dint of *argument* and therefore the man who does not argue with him conquers infallibly.

With regard to the young lady, do not think of making her a nun; simply encourage her, with all prudence and circumspection, to obey the voice of God speaking to her heart and leading her into the Catholic Church. If God desires more from her, He will not fail to begin His own work in her heart. In due time, when it shall please God to grant our Sisters an establishment of their own, vocations will develop and manifest themselves. For the rest, Father Provincial will return before long and will settle everything on the spot.

I embrace you tenderly in our Lord, and beg you will

remember to ask at least a *Hail Mary* from those who attend your Missions for your affectionate brother in Christ,

A. R.

CXXXVIII.

TO DON PAGANI AT RATCLIFFE.

He exhorts him to trust in God, who will not fail to give the necessary temporal means to the Institute.

Stresa,

June 2nd, 1845.

I thank God with all my heart for your safe journey and still more for the good news of our brothers, which has afforded me great consolation. Take every care that all the brothers and yourself in particular, be well protected against damp and cold. Be careful not to let Lockhart suffer spiritual detriment through being too much away. With regard to temporal wants, the word of God cannot fail: "all these things shall be added unto you." It is quite right to use every means in your power to supply these needs, but it would not be right to give way to anxiety, for this would be want of confidence in the most amiable Providence of God, in which we should repose with perfect tranquillity. Be quite sure of this, that the words of Jesus Christ, "be not solicitous" contain a definite precept, and when this precept is faithfully complied with, the thorn of solicitude as also disquietude and uneasiness disappear. I would fain see you perfect in this respect as the Saints have been, a thing most reasonable, *if indeed we believe in God*. God will provide for us in proportion to the measure of our confidence. Thus you will not only remain at peace yourself (doing all you can at the same time to get over your

difficulties), but you must also inspire the others with perfect confidence in God as regards temporal things; and if you do incur debts, well you will pay them. Has the Institute ever been left without means of support? It never has been, it never will be, if only we trust in God and serve Him. Conform yourself in this, as in all things else, to the sentiments and teachings of Jesus Christ, as set forth in the *Fifth Lesson* of the *Maxims of Perfection*; this confidence in God is a fundamental principle of our Institute. I hope you will follow my advice; you will find meditation and frequent acts of faith of great assistance in acquiring fortitude of spirit.

A. R.

CXXXIX.

TO SISTER BONAVENTURA ROSMINI AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

On detachment from those we love.

Stresa,

November 3rd, 1845.

My dear daughter in Christ,

It was only natural that you should be grieved at being separated from your dear Mistress of Novices; but the perturbation you felt was itself a proof that the change was necessary and that Divine Providence (which we must adore in all the events of life) has brought it about for the good of your soul. We must learn to love without being attached to the persons beloved. How can we do this? By loving God, and others for God, by making our love spiritual. When we love persons in God and for God, we no longer feel pain at their absence for it is not their visible presence that we rejoice in, but rather the work of God, His gifts, His virtues communicated to them:

and all these are spiritual things which can be loved equally when far away or near at hand. We must learn to remain united in spirit with those we love: in spirit the most distant hearts can meet. The senses, indeed, crave for sensible intercourse, but we must despise and mortify the senses with holy disdain. If God wills that one who is dear to us should serve Him in some distant place, why shall we not wish the same? Indeed we shall, if we love God; if we love His most holy will above all things, we shall rejoice that it should be accomplished in all things. Besides, how can we tell that the separation from those whom we love may not be the means of their acquiring greater merit for Paradise and more abundant grace? Indeed we should hold it for certain that this is the object of the Divine decrees, since God does all things for our good. Therefore if the love we bear to others is good (and to be good it must seek their welfare), we ought to be only too glad that God should do with them according to His good pleasure. Weigh well what I have said, my dear daughter, and you will become more constant and tranquil in such occurrences.

My dear Sister Bonaventura, I hear you have begun to teach. What a grand opportunity for the exercise of charity towards your little sisters in Christ and for gaining a great treasure of merits! I am glad for your sake.

I hope you will never forget to pray for him who is your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CXL.

TO DON MOLINARI AT S. MICHELE.

He recommends the greatest meekness and humility in the direction of his subjects.

Stresa,

November 6th, 1845.

My dear brother in Christ,

Remember that our Lord would have us all perfect in gentleness and meekness : "Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart." These words become daily more clear to me, and I realise their importance the more forcibly when I meet with contradictions and affronts ; the arena as it were, in which our most loving Lord deigns to train His combatants. As for the brother of whom you speak, you must overcome him with the arms of unwearied charity and gentleness, united to an earnest but tranquil reasoning ; and if you fail to persuade him of the truth (and such a failure may be partly accounted for in his case by physical causes) simply say to him : "My dear brother, obey for the love of God, and then if you believe I am in the wrong tell me by all means what you think. If I do not follow your advice on some point, you have only to write to your Superior, who is also mine. Once he has expressed his desires in the matter I shall lay my own opinion aside and obey gladly. In this way both you and I will become Saints through obedience."

However, when you can do so, try to adopt his opinion ; and if this is impossible give him proofs of your esteem, listen to him patiently, and let him see that you take notice of his arguments and examine them impartially.

He deserves this consideration also by reason of his good faith and genuine piety, though he may be somewhat blunt, and perhaps pertinacious. As for issuing a special and apposite Decree, I do not think this advisable at present, for such a proceeding might hurt the feelings of this dear brother, and weaken that charity which I would fain see ardent and perfect among you. The opportunity will come in due time, and we shall then take advantage of it. Adieu!

A. R.

CXLI.

TO SISTER GELTRUDE AMODINI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He shows that it is a great defect to be unwilling to leave the Central House for the exercise of charity.

Stresa,

November 13th, 1845.

My dear daughter in Christ,

Until now I have had no time to answer your welcome letter. Consider, my daughter, that when you quit the Central House, you are God's messenger and ought, therefore, to fly on the wings of charity. I have great hopes that in future you will act thus, for no good can come of being like Jonas, sorrowful and slow to go whither the spirit of God sends us. A sister, who wishes to remain in the Central House when she is sent forth on a mission of charity, is like a disobedient prophet, and may be the cause of storms arising against the ship of the Institute. However, I feel sure that this will not happen again, as you say, because you will have more faith and a more earnest desire to accomplish the most lovable and adorable will of God.

Drive away all thoughts about your past confessions, and obey your confessor whose words are for you the words

of God Himself. Think only of loving and serving God, grieving over your sins and trusting in His infinite Goodness.

With regard to your returning to the Central House for Easter, I leave this matter to the discretion of the Central Superior. Pray and ask for prayers for some persons in England, who seem likely to be reconciled to the Church, as also for your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CXLII.

TO DON GAGLIARDI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

How the spirit of piety may be combined with many occupations and anxieties.

Stresa,

December 2nd, 1845.

My dear brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,

This letter has reference only to the concluding sentences of yours, which are the most important. It is only too true that, unless we are very watchful, anxieties are apt to destroy fervour of spirit and dry up devotion. But let us consider for our consolation that the cares and responsibilities which we take upon ourselves for God's sake, are utterly different from worldly cares. Jesus Christ Himself who so highly praised Divine contemplation, nevertheless assigned all the cares and anxieties of the episcopate to the dearest of His disciples, the Apostles: "my daily instance the solicitude for all the Churches." He saw the great merit that accrues from such cares in virtue of the charity which they contain and bring into action, in virtue of that charity which is an immense spiritual treasure, the end and perfection of the law.—"This is my commandment." What then shall

we do? In the first place, let us make every effort to form a habit of charity, whence our actions may proceed as from their fountain head. To this end we must make frequent acts of love, confidence, faith, humble prayer and thanksgiving. When once we have formed the habit of repeating these acts, they can be made without effort even in the midst of our occupations, and they will greatly console and strengthen the spirit.

You should also examine yourself to see whether you are faithful to your morning meditation, examen of conscience and other practices of piety. These will strengthen you not a little if they are performed with fervour. Above all, do not rest until you have acquired great devotion in celebrating the Holy Sacrifice; endeavour to retain the ardour you experience in this Divine action, and increase it by a thanksgiving which should be as long as your circumstances will permit. We can and must fulfil our practices of devotion, even when overwhelmed by other cares; the time due to them is precious and it is time well spent, even in the interest of our other occupations, which derive spirit and life from them. Be jealous, therefore, of this time of union with God, and make every effort to persevere therein. God will do the rest, and will abundantly recompense all that you do for Him: He will aid you to vanquish your foes, either by depriving them of energy and daring, or by imparting to you strength and courage to overcome them. The Divine Office, too, should be recited as perfectly as possible, and then it will become delicious and consoling nourishment for the soul. These are your weapons, to which must be added recollection; your mind must be occupied with holy thoughts and good desires, do not allow it to wander and be distracted, like water that flows away and is wasted. These, I say, are invincible weapons; let us make use of them and fear nothing. I believe you made your Retreat last autumn, but it would be a good thing to set aside one day in the month to be spent in communing with God and rekind-

ling the spirit of fervour, especially when you feel it has diminished a little. For this purpose, you should give beforehand all necessary orders for the day, foreseeing the contingencies likely to occur, so that you may not be disturbed afterwards. In fine, let us cling to God as closely as we can, and put great confidence in Him, for He will surely not abandon us. You might even forego the time devoted to some congenial study, and give it to spiritual reading which may restore the heat of charity. I hope all this will be acceptable to you. Let us also pray for each other and for all.

A. R.

CXLIII.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

On the necessity of accuracy in keeping the Accounts.

Stresa,

December 24th, 1845.

My dear brother in Christ,

Although I am aware of and sympathise with your difficulties, you must understand that I lay great stress, almost to a scruple, on exactitude in domestic affairs, not only because order requires it, but still more for fear of endangering the poverty we profess and of introducing abuses in the observance of the various Rules and Decrees, with prejudice to religious perfection and obedience. Hence, it is my earnest desire that all our Superiors, in the spirit of mortification and to their great merit, should not be afraid, so to speak, of lacerating their hands with the thorns, and by thorns I understand temporal inconvenience and trouble, not what is harmful to the soul. On the other hand, my dear brother, reflect that if

you begin well, and put the affairs of the house in good order, by exactitude in your registers and accounts, never exceeding your faculties in the slightest degree, everything will go on smoothly and you will enjoy greater tranquillity of conscience and interior consolation. Now that you are relieved of the care of the Library, I think that the office of Disburser, though tiresome and annoying, is compatible with, inherent in fact to the office of Rector and Superior; and if you face it bravely the difficulty will contribute not a little to your sanctification. The fact of beginning the year with your books not balanced should not alarm you; you must keep a separate account of how matters stood at first, the error can be remedied later on.

As for the books they should certainly be kept exactly, but this is always the case in business. No doubt it is very tiresome when porters and other officials are changed, but I think this difficulty can be overcome by taking pains in the instruction of those newly appointed and exacting precision from them.

Above all, I beg that you will never, as you say "hand in a reckoning made rather by probable conjecture than by exact calculation." The accounts should be rendered *rigorously* even to a farthing, and if there are things you cannot account for in the registers or calculations these should honestly appear as such. Otherwise, as you well understand, the rendering of accounts would not answer the purpose for which it was intended; it would be untruthful and therefore unlawful. It is not an array of neatly written figures we want; what we wish to know is the financial state of the House as it really stands. Hence the person who makes the statement of accounts should scruple to alter or modify them as he thinks fit, in order to give them an appearance of symmetry. I recommend this point to you with the utmost earnestness, and I hope you will never act as you have done without reflecting on the harmfulness of such a proceeding.

Be careful not to incur even the most trifling expense

beyond your ordinary faculties without asking permission to do so. Otherwise we cannot lead that life of perfect poverty, which precludes any act of proprietorship.

I wish you all happiness from the Holy Child Jesus as also to all the brothers. I hope ere long to be with you. Adieu !

A. R.

CXLIV.

TO BROTHER ANTONIO CARLI AT INTRA.

He exhorts him to bear his sufferings with patience.

Stresa,

January 8th, 1846.

My dear son in Christ,

I sympathise with you in your troubles, but let us think of the Cross which our Lord Jesus Christ has borne, and unite ourselves to His Sacred Passion. What strength this thought should give us to suffer with resignation for His love ! If I could relieve you of your cross I would do so most willingly, but the only relief I can suggest is to think of our Crucified Lord and to offer everything to Him, placing in Him all your confidence. Good and evil come from God ; if He send us evils, why does He do so unless it be to enable us to perform a salutary penance for our sins, to purify our souls and give us an occasion of meriting Paradise ? Change of place would not give you relief, and you would only cause needless inconvenience to the respective communities. You know that you were not satisfied when you were here. I sympathise with you and consider your restlessness as an effect of your present state of health ; it is necessary also that you yourself should acknowledge this restlessness as a morbid complaint, and that you should strive to overcome it and remain steadfast and contented at your post.

You know well how busy I am and that I have scarcely time to breathe; for this reason also you should endeavour to keep quiet, without causing me unnecessary anxiety or making me write unnecessary letters. If there were question of anything really beneficial, I would tell you not to spare me, because I am ready to help you in any way I can. But a change of abode is utterly useless, especially at this time of the year; so wait quietly till the winter is over, the days pass by and our ailments with them. In the spring you will feel better, please God.

Be resigned therefore and put your trust in God and in your kind Superior at Intra, then you will gain great merit. May God bless and console you!

A. R.

CXLV.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

On fears relative to predestination.

Stresa,

January 13th, 1846.

My dear brother in Christ,

With reference to what you say at the end of your letter concerning doubts about your eternal salvation, consider that of those who have confided in the Lord not one has perished. Have full confidence therefore, and to this end meditate day and night on the Humanity of Jesus Christ, His Sacred Heart, His sentiments, His unspeakable goodness and the merits of His Blood, so that you may have the image of our Crucified Lord and Saviour always present to your mind. In order to confirm this confidence, the pledge of salvation, let us make great account of the Sacrament of Penance, accusing ourselves with great humility and child-like simplicity. You will also find it helpful whenever you commit a fault, however

light, to oppose to it acts of deep contrition and fresh resolutions, without the least discouragement, nay, with renewed hope and confidence, saying: "Now have I begun, this is the change of the right hand of the Most High."

Lest, however, we should entertain that fatal confidence in self which gives rise to negligence, we must offer to God frequent acts of humility, confessing our utter misery, poverty, nothingness and wickedness, without ever growing weary or thinking we have humbled ourselves sufficiently. There are many beautiful verses in the Psalms that can help us in this, especially those in which the soul speaks out of the depths of her abasement and rises to the greatest confidence. "Many there are that rise up against me. Thou, O Lord, art my support, my glory and the lifter up of my head. I slept and took my rest, and rose up again for the Lord hath sustained me." These sentiments serve to keep us recollected and curb the imagination, the source of all evils. We really must hold this imagination captive and deny it all poisoned and flattering stimulants. Unworthy as I am, I do not fail to pray every day for you and for all our dear brothers. "Holy Father keep them in Thy Name. Sanctify them in truth." The peace of Christ be with you and all your Community.

A. R.

CXLVI.

TO A CLERIC N. N. AT INTRA.

On constancy in well-doing.

Stresa,

February 3rd, 1846.

My dear son in Christ,

I read your letter with pleasure, as I gather from it that you are less subject than you were last year to *childish vacillation*, in consequence of which the merest trifles caused you disturbance of mind. I pray God to make you a man, and give you strength of mind and dominion over that fickle imagination, which creates and magnifies difficulties until we mistake shadows for giants. In order that you may attain this desirable steadfastness, accustom yourself to consider good in itself and to love it for its own sake. Then nothing will have power to divert you from your good resolutions, since good is always such, whatever be its external surroundings. We have but to love it with all our heart, with unbounded affection.

In the second place, in order to acquire this constancy in well-doing it is necessary to cherish a lively confidence in God, incessantly beseeching Him to succour us, confessing our transgressions and acknowledging our weakness. Indeed, the man who trusts in God cannot perish. If we are humble and have charity, God is always ready to grant us the grace of constancy and the grace likewise to overcome our foes.

In the third place, it behoves us to conceive a great idea of our vocation, loving it more and more every day, and to acquire a high esteem of all the duties appertaining to our office and to obedience, since all these duties are fulfilled

for God, and for our neighbour in whom we love God. Who can doubt that if you renounce all merely human sentiments and self-love, you will become a true religious not only in word but in deed also, a true disciple of Jesus Christ, a lover of His holy Cross? But in order to subdue self-love we must cherish a sincere respect for our superiors, a sincere love for all, because it is self-love and pride that hinder charity and attachment and humble obedience to superiors, in whom we honour and love God Himself. Take courage therefore, my dear son. Make war upon every sentiment of self-love; in this way you will soon become gentle and kind, and happy too, by reason of the sweet consolation imparted by meekness, that ineffable peace and calm which no vicissitude can disturb. On the other hand, every feeling of bitterness, envy, ill-will, bad humour or irritation comes from pride and tends to the ruin of our soul, by robbing it of peace and charity and of the grace of our Lord, which is all mildness and humility. This is what I hope for from my dear Fiorenzo.

A. R.

CXLVII.

TO A PRIEST N. N. IN ENGLAND.

He urges him to uproot every feeling contrary to charity and humility.

Stresa,

March 9th, 1846.

My dear brother in Christ,

As regards the mission entrusted to you, you are quite right not to bind yourself by hard and fast rules. Increased experience and pastoral zeal will make you more and more diligent in winning souls for the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and in keeping and perfecting those that are already gained. Above all, use the great means of prayer, the only means whereby the shepherd of souls can render his labours fruitful. Commend the souls confided to you to the Prince of Pastors, who was crucified for their love: derive all your prudence from His Wounds, from the Blood and Water that flowed from His open side, and the light of this prudence will be none other than the flame of ardent charity.

You tell me that, naturally speaking, you "would have a great repugnance to living again with Brother C." What does this show but an excessive sensitiveness which ought at all costs to be overcome? You will never attain to perfection unless you conquer yourself completely in this respect. It is not a sufficient excuse to say that this antipathy is an effect of *nature* rather than of your *will*; no, that is not enough, for true humility and great charity destroy every natural antipathy arising from wounded self-love, and produce in its stead much gentleness and kindness of heart. The Saints associated by preference with

those who held them in least account, who blamed and re-proved them; and we must imitate the Saints and not be satisfied till we are like them. Self-love and deeply-rooted pride, even more than nature, have all kinds of susceptibilities and repugnances, are easily offended and afflicted, and then find excuses to hide so monstrous a defect. Let us not deceive ourselves, but search out the poisoned root within us and strive our utmost till it be extirpated, till the sweet and unalterable charity of our Lord Jesus Christ hold undivided sway over our hearts. He alone will make our work fruitful and render us constant in His service.

You must also try to rid yourself of the feeling expressed in the words: "I should certainly find it hard if some one came here to be my Superior." I, on my part, can desire for you no greater grace than this, that God should infuse into your soul great contentment and consolation of spirit at the thought of some one being sent to the Mission, to whom you should be humbly subject and cheerfully obedient. This is a grace I constantly implore from God for you, and for myself and for all our brothers, because nothing affords me greater consolation than to see that we all have the same sentiments as the meek and humble Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the devil is not propagating his sentiments in our hearts. He sows his tares over the seed of God's word; these tares are chiefly the evil germs of pride, and he sows them *by night*, that is to say without our being aware of it. We wake as it were from sleep and find the tares have sprung up in our hearts. Woe to us then if, instead of being grieved and hindering the tares from choking the good grain, we say to ourselves: "I am not conscious of ever having consented to this sentiment, I am not conscious of having positively admitted it into my heart." No, we are conscious of nothing, for we were slumbering when the enemy entered the stronghold. Does it follow, though, that the bad seed is not bad, that the tares are not tares, or that presumption, self-love, pride and all their attendant sentiments and feelings are not pernicious and abomin-

able? Deluded indeed should we be if we thought so! I tremble for myself and for you my dear brother, and most earnestly entreat you to find no relish or pleasure save in lowliness—"not minding high things,"—but rather in obedience, in self-abasement in our own eyes and before men, in humble and simple dependence, aye in the contempt and shame of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Meditate on the sentiments of the humble, meek and loving Heart of Jesus and conform thereto your own. If you find that aught has gained entrance (with or without the consent of your will) that is opposed to the sentiments of Christ, exterminate it by means of prayer and mortification and all kinds of acts of humility and charity. It is by this means only that the sweetness of Christ's charity will abide in us; it is on this foundation that you must rely, begging our Lord with the greater confidence to sanctify your flock if you have first obtained of Him the sanctification of your own heart. I trust you will choose this path, setting aside all subtle excuses that may diminish the generosity of your resolution. May our dear Lady bless you!

A. R.

CXLVIII.

TO DON GIOVANNI CAVARERO AT STRESA.

He exhorts him to undertake the office of Superior with courage and confidence.

Stresa,

April 16th, 1846.

My dear brother in Christ.

I reply at last, though tardily, to your welcome letter. Even were it the case, as you fear, that you lacked some of the qualities desirable in a Superior, nevertheless your present office should not occasion in you the least disquietude of conscience, since it has been accepted *under obedience*. As you had no choice in the matter, you could not decline the post. What is to be done then? All you can do is to employ wisely all your energies in order to fulfil the duties attached to the office imposed on you by God, and then to remain tranquil concerning the result. If your office requires vigilance, active exertions for the maintenance of order and observance of the rules, zeal for the salvation of souls, and good example, all these duties do not require from you anything that is beyond your strength. Moreover these duties should be for you a welcome stimulus to make you cultivate those qualities in which you believe yourself to be deficient, and from this point of view your present office may greatly contribute to your improvement and sanctification. Therefore I need only to exhort you to cultivate well the field that has been given to you by God, and to do what in you lies to find therein the hidden treasure, a treasure that is certainly not wanting. Endeavour to set an example to the rest, especially by fidelity to the common duties of piety, and urge

forward your companions with kindness and firmness, that is to say with continual and persevering efforts to perfect order and perfect observance. Take an interest in everything that is done by each one in the house and in the school, and consider carefully in your own mind the best way of leading the brothers to act through conscientious motives.

I take this opportunity of begging you to devote special attention, with prudence and vigilance, to the youth receiving his education in the house. Watch over him with the devotion of a heart that loves and fears because it loves. Be of good courage, drive away your scruples, and God bless you!

A. R.

CXLIX.

TO FATHER PETER HUTTON IN ENGLAND.

He speaks of his consolation in seeing that the Brethren unite the active life with the contemplative.

Stresa,

June 23rd, 1846.

My dear brother in Christ,

It affords me great consolation to receive tidings of my beloved brethren who are serving our Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Church in England. I derive consolation alike from the spiritual harvest which through God's blessing is being reaped by our itinerant Missionaries (may God increase their number!) and from the active zeal of our Priests engaged in parish work, and the devotion and fervour of our Novices, in the midst of whom you live with Father Provincial. I pray to God without ceasing that He vouchsafe to impart to us all the true spirit of our Institute. This is a spirit of *humility*, which finds all its delight and its wealth in secret communion with God, and counts

as dross the praises of men and the clamour of worldly renown, but it is also a spirit of *charity* which inspires those who possess it with alacrity and activity, rendering them prompt at the least sign from God and obedience to undertake vast and generous enterprises. The combination of profound restfulness and tranquillity of spirit in God with the utmost activity regulated by the will of God Himself, constitutes the perfection which is set before the disciples of our Institute.

I hope the new house will be a success. How I should like to see a College for boys opened! I hope God will grant us this consolation also, and I regard it as a good foundation for the work of the Institute in England. God bless you all!

A. R.

CL.

TO DON LORENZO GASTALDI AT TURIN.

He urges him to correspond with the grace of religious vocation.

Stresa,

July 7th, 1846.

Reverend Sir,

Your letter, informing me that you feel called to the religious state, has afforded me no little consolation.

The grace of making oneself a "fool for Christ's sake" is so precious, that I might apply to it what the Holy Scriptures say of charity: "If a man give his whole substance for love he shall despise it as nothing." The last article of the second part of the *Summa* is a great favourite of mine. St. Thomas there shows that it is not necessary to ask counsel in the choice of the religious state, for this counsel has already been given by our Blessed Lord. Although our Divine Master has not enforced

it as a precept, yet it is certain that no one can do wrong in embracing the religious state, if he do so with the pure intention of seeking to become perfect and to follow Jesus Christ more closely. I believe that all those who have received light to perceive and appreciate the value and felicity of perfection, not only do well to follow the evangelical counsels, but have likewise within themselves the grace and strength necessary to overcome all the obstacles they may encounter, always supposing that they cultivate the grace by means of prayer and a resolute purpose.

From what I have said, you will understand that I am not only prepared to encourage you to carry out your magnanimous resolution and to respond to our Lord's gracious invitation with a generous heart, but I also feel sure that you will overcome all difficulties in virtue of that spiritual prudence which our Lord will not fail to bestow on you. I should advise you to act as I myself did in similar circumstances, being guided as I trust by God Himself. In the first place implore of our Lord that prudence which you now require for the disposal of your worldly affairs, and then try to arrange matters in the way most conducive to the peace and concord of your family, as also to make arrangements for the education of your youngest brother, whom you will be able to assist even in religion.

As to the good you are able to effect under present circumstances, I think that consideration should not deter you from seeking the greater good of your own soul, not indeed a temporal advantage, but an increase in charity towards God and your neighbour. Besides, the very fact of your becoming more perfect and more united with God, the Author of all good, is a surety that you will become a more useful instrument for His glory and the good of souls. Neither should you say lightly, that any falling short of perfection is a consequence of your tepidity and not of your state of life, because our Lord gave these counsels of perfection for the very purpose

of conquering our tepidity and weakness. He did not say: "Be stronger, be more fervent." What He said was: "If you wish to be more fervent and stronger, that is if you wish to be perfect, make a profession of poverty, chastity and obedience, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me," just because He intended to make the grace of perfection conditional on the employment of these means. You are aware, my dear sir, that the Saints took this view of the matter; and there is something admirable in the clearness of the doctrine inculcated by St. Bernard in his Letters, St. Thomas, St. Alphonsus and other Doctors of the Church, as also in the generosity displayed by the Saints in corresponding with grace. Your own St. Aloysius, for instance, paid no heed to the arguments of those who tried to persuade him that he was doing great injury to his family and subjects by entering religion, and there are many similar examples in the annals of sanctity. Therefore I cannot do less than advise and exhort you to respond to the Divine invitation. The least degree of holiness is of infinite value, and we may well give all to purchase the "field" where so precious a treasure is hidden. I take this field to signify the religious state, in which, according to the beautiful words of St. Bernard: "Man lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more speedily, walks more cautiously, receives the dew of grace more frequently, rests more securely, dies more confidently: his soul is cleansed more quickly and rewarded more abundantly."

It is also certain that if the religious state had no other advantage than that of enabling us to fight our spiritual battles, not as individual soldiers, but in a compact body, this consideration alone should have much weight with one who seeks the greater glory of God: for a greater association implies a greater power, whether for good or for evil. If the wicked associate with evil intent, it is only right that the soldiers of Christ should be strictly united and well organized in the good cause.

This is the advice I have to offer you. As for the choice of a religious order, pray, and our Lord will enlighten you. If you wish for information concerning the Institute I shall be happy to forward it to you; or if you could spend a few days with us in solitude, that would be better still. In the meantime pray for

Your affectionate friend,

A. R.

CLI.

TO A PRIEST N. N. AT INTRA.

On detachment from kindred.

Stresa,

July 24th, 1846.

My dear brother in Christ,

It is natural that parents should feel the separation from their children, nevertheless they are bound to endure it with resignation in the event of the latter being called to the religious state. Children, on their part, must detach themselves from their parents in order to have no other Father on earth than God himself, no Mother save holy Poverty. Jesus Christ has said that he who has once put his hand to the plough must not even look back, but go forward steadily. We should not desire, but rather dread returning to the bosom of the family we have abandoned, for there is only too much reason to anticipate a diminution of fervour, of supernatural light, of spiritual strength and merit. The practice of virtue will afterwards appear more difficult, and the sweet yoke of the religious and spiritual life become galling. On this account I am glad to see that you have placed yourself in the golden state of indifference, so that you will receive with equal and perhaps even greater joy my answer to your

request to spend the holidays with your family. My answer is that I cannot permit this, for I do not think it profitable to the *welfare* and *perfection* of your soul, to which we have resolved to dedicate ourselves in the Institute, and I am afraid it would not give edification and good example to our Brothers. Therefore instead of going home occupy yourself during this vacation in increasing your religious fervour, in arousing within you the sacerdotal spirit which requires of you so high a degree of perfection, and in rendering yourself like to our High Priest who was also the Victim that died for us on the Cross, Jesus Christ. Pray to God for your parents, but for the present put away the thought of paying them a visit; learn to become more detached from the things of the world and think only of loving and serving God perfectly unto His greater glory.

Courage then! Be cheerful and resigned and God will bless you.

A. R.

CLII.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

He reprovcs him for his want of obedience.

Stresa,

August 13th, 1846.

My dear son in Christ,

I desire, God knows how earnestly, that you should walk in the path of perfection to which you are called, according to the spirit of our Institute ; but I perceive that you must give more attention to the attainment of perfect obedience, devotedness, attachment and unbounded submission to your immediate Superiors without which there can be neither humility, charity, tranquillity nor peace. I have therefore deemed it well not to assign you any fixed office for this year, but I simply desire you to *obey your immediate Superior in everything*, allowing yourself to be guided and made use of by him for the love of God, with that docility which is enjoined by our rules and is essential to perfection. You must make it a rule to repress every complaint or secret resentment, no matter what command be laid upon you, and hold yourself in readiness to leave the work you are engaged in as soon as any fresh order is given by your Superior, and this without paying any attention to the sophistical distinctions of your imagination and its human reasonings, which are often suggestions of the devil. Endeavour to perceive clearly and to deplore the faults you have committed during the past year, when you so far forgot yourself as to take offence because your Superior did not make use of you, as though he were not free to exercise control over your office. All the time you were cherishing these sentiments, which by the grace of God you now deplore, you were grievously in fault as regards the golden rule

which begins : “ let all leave to their Superior and Father the free disposal as well of themselves as of all they possess, as true obedience requires.” You would do well to meditate on these words before the Crucifix.

I hope you have already humbly asked pardon of your Superior for conduct so utterly opposed to perfect humility and religious obedience. During the few days you still remain with him, let it be your chief endeavour to give unmistakeable proofs of your affection and gratitude, and to set a good example to all by serving God in the humility and poverty of spirit that our Institute expects from its true disciples.

The Institute, in promoting you to the priesthood, hoped that you would grow more humble, more perfect, more earnest in fulfilling the obligations of your vocation. Therefore if you fail in your duty, you will have to render a stricter account to God. I hope you will acquire solid virtue and go straight on in the right path, to the great advantage of your own soul and the consolation of

Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CLIII.

TO DON GIUSEPPE GAGLIARDI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the direction of the College.

Stresa,

October 24th, 1846.

My dear brother in Christ,

Judging by your letter, you seem to be afraid that the College has lost its place in my esteem. This is not the case; nor has any one reported the boys as being undisciplined or unruly. On the contrary, I am fully persuaded that our little College, by God's blessing, is among the best in the kingdom. Nevertheless we should make every effort to introduce improvements and remove anything even slightly defective; all this, however, without losing heart. God will abundantly assist you in the labours of your office, because you do all for Him and for Him alone. *Confidence* and *prayer* are the great means of obtaining everything. But I should be very sorry to see your health impaired by over-work, so you must exercise your ingenuity in economising time, as also in taking the necessary repose, the seven hours prescribed by the *Rules on Domestic Order* at the very least, and in your case an extra half-hour.

But how are you to manage? Here are some suggestions. 1st, Avoid any unnecessary intercourse with strangers. 2nd, Leave to Father Minister all the work that can *safely* be entrusted to him. 3rd, Never do other people's work for them, but let each one do his own, and content yourself with seeing that it is done. I do not deny that the work will sometimes be left undone and the Rector may have to supply the deficiency himself, but this will seldom happen if he is a little strict, that is to say, if he insists on

each one performing his allotted task. 4th, Certain things that are not pressing should be deferred to another day whenever they cannot be performed without omitting something of greater importance, such as our spiritual exercises. By these and similar devices one may gain time also for the necessary rest.

The advice left you as a legacy by Padre Setti is indeed golden, and quite in accordance with my views; you cannot do better than follow it. Embracing you tenderly, I recommend myself to your prayers.

A. R.

CLIV.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

He expresses his regret at seeing him wavering in his vocation and suggests the remedy.

Stresa,

December 12th, 1846.

My dear son in Christ,

When I see the sons whom Jesus Christ has given me making progress in their holy vocation and advancing from strength to strength, my soul is inundated with consolation: it is most painful, on the other hand, to see any of them pursue a contrary course. I had hoped, my dear brother, that you would be one of those who should increase my joy and delight in the Lord, but the letter in which you inform me briefly, curtly, and without any explanation that you are rapidly losing the spirit of our Institute and with it your vocation, has filled me with dismay. Remember you are no longer a child; you cannot make your virtue dependent on external circumstances, nor should you require props and support to prevent your falling to the ground. This would be a sign that neither virtue nor the spirit of God had ever taken root in your soul; and when the seed of the Divine



word does not take root, it is lost as far as the soul is concerned, or rather the soul itself is ruined. Can it be that you are unable to be good or make progress in sanctity? No, you cannot plead that in excuse; you have only to exert your own will. God has given you free-will, He has set before you fire and water, life and death: it is for you to choose. God on his part is always ready to bestow His grace, if only you will ask for it. Ask and you shall obtain, knock and it shall be opened to you, seek and you shall find. I fear you do not pray enough or that you do not pray with due humility, or that you do not ask for what you really need: namely, justice, perfection, holiness of life, strength to resist your passions, the victory over self-love, the virtues of the Gospel, grace to be strengthened in your holy vocation. All these things may be obtained from God, if they are asked for with an upright and a great heart. "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not and it shall be given him. . . . You ask and receive not because you ask amiss."

When you tell me you are *losing your vocation*, I must say I am horrified to see with what facility and levity, from one day to another, you withdraw your affections from what ought to be your treasure and your salvation, and are prepared to reject the greatest of all graces. But what do you mean by losing your vocation? Are you not bound already by the sacred bonds of lifelong vows to God's service? Your vocation is no longer a matter of choice: it is simply incumbent on you to be faithful to the promise you have made to God once for all, for time and for eternity, under the penalty, if you fail, of eternal ruin. How can you possibly, with such incredible levity, let your fidelity to the promises made to God and accepted by His Church, depend on external things, on living in one place rather than another? Would not any one be horrified at such an idea if he did but retain the slightest fear of God's judgments? Do but reflect that your perpetual vows (bonds most dear and blissful to the loving soul) cannot be

broken without preferring hell to heaven, Satan to Christ. I cannot believe you are really in danger of losing your vocation : but let me tell you, it is a question of saving or losing your soul : nothing less than your salvation is at stake.

Come now, take my advice. Repel and conquer these temptations with the weapons of Faith ; and to this end submit to the hard but salutary yoke of holy discipline. Above all, you must bring into subjection that self-love which is an enemy to God, that self-love which excites the imagination and disturbs the serenity of the judgment, that self-love which like some sweet and subtle poison kills the soul, and can only be subdued by continual acts of humility and the renunciation of self in all its forms. In fine, there are two things which I strongly recommend to you.

1st. To love God for His own sake and to be faithful to Him without conditions ; not allowing your virtue to be dependent on places or circumstances, but making up your mind to practise virtue *in all places* and *under all circumstances*, fighting and struggling, with the sincere and irrevocable resolve to do right at any cost (and without conflict there is no virtue).

2nd. To have recourse to constant and humble prayer, always blaming yourself and begging of God incessantly the grace of fidelity to your vocation, regarding each day as though it were your last, so that when God calls you to account for all the graces entrusted to you, you may be found faithful. This fidelity to our vocation is the pearl which must be purchased by the sacrifice of all things else. At any cost let us do our duty ; at any cost be faithful to God ; let all else perish provided we advance in perfection and in imitation of Jesus Christ, who entered into glory by means of suffering. If you are bent on doing your duty, on sanctifying yourself in the place and office assigned to you by God, on bearing fruit in the vineyard of Religion, and giving consolation to your superiors who neglect nothing they think beneficial to your soul, you will be happy,

you will consider yourself most fortunate, you will promote your own and your neighbour's interests to the glory of God. If you are peevish and obstinate and turn back, you will be unhappy in this life and in the next. I repeat once more that everything depends on yourself: only an earnest resolve can make persons, places and circumstances helpful to your soul and occasions of merit. I hope that you will make this firm resolution and that you will never recall it. I pray with all my heart that God may enlighten you! May Jesus and Mary bless you!

Your father in Christ,

A. R.

CLV.

TO THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On the lessons we may learn from the Infant Jesus.

Stresa,

December 24th, 1846.

Beloved daughters in Christ,

Your welcome letter of the 21st inst. brought me your united good wishes for the approaching solemnity of Christmas and the New Year, the expression, I doubt not, of your charity. I thank you. And if the Child Jesus, in spite of my unworthiness, deign to ratify the wishes and prayers I have poured out for you at the crib of Bethlehem, He will shower upon you every manner of benediction. Nor can we doubt He will be unusually liberal of His gifts to His spouses, when He makes His first appearance on earth to enrich all the faithful, that so, as the Apostle says, we may be made rich by His poverty. Ah! yes, my dear daughters, let us unite ourselves to the holy shepherds, let us claim the protection of the Virgin Mother and St. Joseph in that cave which has now become

the throne of the King of Kings and Lord of Glory ; let us approach with the most humble reverence, but without fear, to offer our homage to the Son of God, the Eternal Word made flesh for us, and born in a stable, and laid in a manger. What a mystery of love ! What a miracle of mercy ! Let us approach this Divine Babe, our redemption, our justice, our salvation, our love, and our only hope, desire and consolation ! May our hearts be enamoured of His sweetness, and burn with tenderness on beholding the discomforts and hardships of His infancy ! In contemplating the lowly and suffering Infant, we shall read in the Babe's tears the first lessons of the Divine Master. It is a lesson of the deepest humility, of extreme poverty and of the most generous heroic charity in the service of that humanity which He has come to save, and specially of that tender and innocent childhood in whose behalf you have the honour to be enlisted as fellow-workers. In these holy days then, let us offer Him our hearts, prompt and docile to His inspirations and free from all attachment to earth and to self, and He will replenish them with His treasures, with His spirit, with Himself. Thus will our hearts become a resting-place acceptable and pleasing to the Divine Guest, they will be inflamed with the ardour of His Divine Heart. And so I hope you will celebrate these beautiful feasts of the Infant Jesus in holy joy, and especially do I beg of you when you embrace your Spouse in Holy Communion, to pray for

Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CLVI.

TO SISTER M. GERTRUDE VAVASOUR AND SISTER
M. CECILIA McCABE AT LOUGHBOROUGH.

On the greatness of their vocation and the necessity of corresponding to it.

Stresa,

St. Stephen's Day, 1846.

My dear daughters in Christ,

I have been waiting for a quiet opportunity of answering your letters. But I should not like to see this holy and consoling season, wherein we celebrate our Redeemer's Birth, pass by without writing to you and telling you of my heartfelt wishes for your sanctification and eternal happiness. I thank the Infant Jesus for choosing you to be His spouses, and drawing you out of the world to consecrate you entirely to His love, which is consummated in the exercise of charity. He Himself has said that all we do for our neighbour is done for Him. He so loves men, those especially who believe in Him, that he makes their joys and their sorrows His own. How great then is the grace of holy vocation, bestowed on you in preference to many others, that under the ensign of Providence you may employ all your powers in His service, in unbounded charity to your neighbour! Great indeed is the grace of a religious vocation; it is the pearl of great price, for whose sake we may well sell all that we possess. Most earnestly do I beg our dear Lord to enable you to abide with constancy in the career you have chosen, for the crown is not given to him who begins, but to him who perseveres to the end. Grace will not fail you, if only you ask for it humbly and confidently, for that God who calls

souls to His special service has never been known to abandon them. He it is who leads them in battle and fights for them, and if He hide Himself for a moment, yet is He ever near, the unseen witness of the conflict He wages and the victory He gains in them.

Your welcome letters are a proof to me of the blessing of our Lord, and the success which will crown your generous resolution to trample the world under foot, and live and die to Christ alone in the humble Institute of Providence. I thank you also for your tokens of filial attachment to the Superior you have never seen, and I assure you that my affection for you in the Lord is no less sincere, there being nothing I desire more ardently than to see you attain to a high degree of sanctity. This certainly cannot be done unless we have a sincere contempt of earthly things, unless we set aside the prejudices and false maxims of the world and are renewed in the spirit of the Gospel, unless we humble and deny ourselves, unless we love poverty, contempt and the cross, and take everything in good part, and love those even who do not care for us. All these virtues I wish to you and all my daughters in Christ, and this is the petition I offer to the Incarnate God, whom we now see with the eyes of Faith a tiny Babe, weeping on the straw in the bitter cold of Bethlehem. All these virtues I ask for my daughters, for I wish to see them all saints.

I congratulate you and the other two Sisters on the privilege God has bestowed on you of receiving the religious habit: a perpetual memorial of your renunciation of the world and consecration to God's service. I am glad to hear that you hold your holy Father Provincial in due esteem; be guided by his counsels and you will always know the will of God. I am pleased, too, to see that you are loving children to your dear Mother. It will always be a pleasure to me to hear from you, and I am glad to see that you are studying Italian, without which we should not be able to exchange ideas, as I do not know English. I have written one letter to you both, because all the Sisters

of Providence are like one person in Christ. Pray for me. I have so many wants. If you knew how heavy is my burden and how great my needs, you would feel sorry for your Father. On receiving this letter I beg you to offer a Holy Communion for me. May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost bless you !

Your father in Christ,

A. R.

CLVII.

TO DON PIETRO BERTETTI AT TORTONA.

He solves some doubts concerning his vocation.

Stresa,

December 26th, 1846.

Very Reverend and dear Canon,

I have prayed to God and offered the Holy Sacrifice before writing to you, and have also consulted my two companions Toscani and Puecher. The conclusion I have come to is this, that if you come to me I shall receive and welcome you *as one sent by God*. The chief obstacle, namely, the good you can do where you are, does not move me in the least. A man who offers himself to God without reserve and lets himself be made use of by superiors, does the greatest possible good to his own soul, and from a broad point of view to the Church also : and nothing can be compared to this universal good. Nevertheless, though from what I have said you can understand what my own opinion is, I do not actually offer you any advice. God alone can move you and give you courage and strength to take the step. My dear Canon, pray to our Lord, as we also will pray, that His will be accomplished in us, and let us ask our Lady to intercede for us. I will say no more ; I embrace

you in Him who said : " This is My commandment, that you love one another."

A. R.

CLVIII.

TO DON G. B. PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

He urges the Provincial to make every effort to relieve the distress in Ireland.

Stresa,

December 31st, 1846.

My dear brother in Christ,

"The charity of Christ presseth us." I read in the newspapers appalling accounts of the famine that is devastating Catholic Ireland. We belong to the Institute of Charity : shall we remain indifferent and idle spectators of our brethren's misery ? Can we do nothing for them ? It is in the time of greatest calamity that we must display all the charity that glows in our hearts, when we must go, I would almost say, beyond our strength, putting our trust in the Divine Providence and Goodness, aye, when we may attempt even the impossible, for nothing is impossible with God, who said : " This is My commandment that you love one another." Nothing is impossible to His charity burning in our hearts.

You understand me ; my desire is, that after earnest prayer, you should consider carefully what great effort you can make for the relief of the starving people of Ireland, thousands of whom implore our help in the pangs of death. This heart-rending cry tells of the despair of a whole nation : let us not close our ears or harden our hearts. Now is the time for unwonted, extraordinary activity : and it is for you who are on the spot to consider the ways and means, only I beg of you let nothing be left untried. If

it is necessary to go through England begging for alms, let it be done ; if societies can do any good, encourage and promote them ; if you think well, let our missionaries ask alms for Ireland wherever they go. In fine, in proportion to the greatness of your undertaking and the magnitude of your plans, and to the boldness, earnestness and even the holy importunity of your appeals for help, and the number of persons you employ in this work, will God bless and abundantly compensate your labour and toil, the reproaches and rebuffs you receive, for He has said : " As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren you did it to Me." It is for you to animate and direct our brothers ; you and they must animate and direct others. I will add no more, feeling sure that your mind and heart will supply the rest. Adieu !

A. R.

CLIX.

TO DON PIETRO BERTETTI AT TORTONA.

On the dispositions with which he should prepare himself to enter the Institute.

Stresa,

January 3rd, 1847.

I approve of your plan of waiting till the next vacation, and then taking the decisive step.

In the meantime, give yourself to prayer, to fulfilling the duties of your present condition with all possible perfection ; take the subject-matter of your meditations from our Book of Rules, and recite every day, if possible, the little prayer of St. Ignatius : " Accept, O Lord, my entire liberty," &c. Open your heart to that universal charity, which embraces all mankind and desires to do them all possible good at the cost of any sacrifice and suffering, in order to resemble

more closely Jesus Christ Crucified for the love of man: all this, however, according to the order of charity and the supreme rule of the Divine will. Then, simplicity, joy, constancy *in latitudine cordis*. "In the way of thy commandments I ran when thou didst enlarge my heart."

A. R.

CLX.

TO DON G. B. PAGANI AT RATCLIFFE COLLEGE.

We must submit to the will of God, even in the privation of sensible consolation.

Stresa,

January 12th, 1847.

My dear brother in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory. Amen!

I have received the report you forwarded to me, and have read it with pleasure. For the present I shall confine myself to a few points, the most important of which concerns the Provincial himself. You complain, my dear brother, that you no longer "have the piety, the fervour and the light of the first years spent in England." But do not be deceived. God wishes to undeceive you. These are not the things we are seeking, we aim at better things: our object is simply the accomplishment in all simplicity of God's most holy and most lovable will. "He that does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.—My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work.—My judgment is just because I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."—This is sound doctrine, this is our example, the one and only object of our aspirations, namely our Father's will "that we may perfect His work."

To speak plainly, it seems to me that you have attached too much importance to sensible devotion. Now you must endeavour to rest content in the privation of all the sweetness of devotion, preferring to it the will of Him who decreed for His only-begotten Son the dereliction and agony of the Garden and the torments of the Cross. In so doing you lose nothing, you gain immensely because this is the only way to make real progress. It is true that there is a great difference between the state of a soul radiant with sensible affection, light and joy, and that of a soul weak and disconsolate, immersed in gloom and sadness. But what of that? It is *the will of God* that the soul should be in darkness: therefore it is a blessing beyond compare, as great as God Himself, since the will of God is God. What is to be done then? We must beware of the temptations of the enemy, of his treacherous insinuations, and especially of those hasty resolutions of which he is so fond. Such would be the thought which you tell me has sometimes come into your mind, of freeing yourself from the cross which God Himself has laid upon your shoulders. Reply to the temptation: "The chalice that my Father has given me shall I not drink it?" And again: "Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal to me, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men."

Ought you not rather to be grateful to the loving kindness of God who has chosen you to be leader of this little flock, binding Himself thereby to aid you in all things needful, as indeed He does in a manner truly marvellous. What does it matter if you are in bad health, weak and disheartened? Has God need of your strength or of your consolations for the promotion of His glory? Does He not manifest His glory the more clearly by "choosing the weak things of the world and the things that are not, that He may confound the things that are?" He would have you learn by experience that it is not you, but He who does everything. This is a precious lesson, a truth which should be for you the subject of holy exultation, seeing that all the glory accrues to the Creator, and the creature

can attribute none of it to himself. O happy necessity! The thought is full of delight to one who loves God, for he rejoices to see that he can find nothing wherein to glory, whilst his Lord is glorified in all things.

Therefore if the flesh is weak, if you are downcast in spirit, have recourse to prayer. "Is any one sad among you? Let him pray. Is he cheerful? Let him sing psalms." Say by all means: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me:" but be sure you add: "Not my will but Thine be done." Pour out your griefs before God, but always conclude by accepting His holy will, without making the slightest attempt to relieve yourself of the burden laid upon you. He sees the cross, He has weighed it before giving it to you. Would you have recourse to a higher superior than your General? Well, have recourse to God. He will listen to you, and if it so please Him, He can set you free: by acting otherwise you show want of faith in the Divine goodness. Ah! let us be of those who say: "we have known His charity." Believe firmly in the love of God: it is Faith that sustains and strengthens us, Faith that makes us rise superior to ourselves, *an ardent faith resting on hope*. Let us not imitate those who say to God: "Thou art a hard man, thou reapest what thou hast not sown, and gatherest what thou hast not strewed." Rather let us say: "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee: what reward shall we have?" He wishes us to look to Him for a reward, to ask it, even to claim it, that by crowning His own gifts in us He may be glorified.

What! Do you think you have lost or are losing the fruit of all your labours in God's service, and especially of those you are sustaining beneath so heavy a cross? No, no: they are not lost: they are recorded in heaven. You should acknowledge this, and not slander yourself or count your merits as nothing (though indeed they are nothing in comparison with the glory due to God for them). On the contrary, it is your duty to appreciate them in order that your heart may expand to sentiments of

boundless gratitude, of inexhaustible and infinite hope in Him, who has wrought the good work in you, who suffers in you and for you, and will Himself in due time rejoice and be glorified in you. It would be a grievous delusion, great temerity to say that you have gone back instead of gaining ground after labouring for so many years for the kingdom of God and His justice. There is no necessity for you to see the riches you have amassed; indeed it is better that they should be hidden in the Divine treasury, where no thief can break through and steal.

Therefore "judge not." Repel the sinister judgment of yourself prompted by the evil one, the spirit of sadness, whom you may recognize by this token that he is diametrically opposed to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Paraclete whose fruits are *charity, joy and peace*. It is true that we cannot at will shake off the sadness which comes over our lower nature, but we may make it of incalculable benefit by loving it, by enduring it as a precious cross which God lays upon us, for, indeed, it opens our eyes to the knowledge of ourselves, it assists us greatly to keep ourselves in lowliness and humility, and to surrender ourselves into the hands of Him who calls blessed the poor in spirit and comforts those that mourn. Let sadness then remain in our animal nature, if we cannot drive it away: let it remain in the flesh which must be crucified with Christ, but let it not reach the *will*, which offers itself for ever to the service of God, quite content to sow in tears if so be it may reap in joy. Let the will remain unmoved, let it bless God without ceasing, undisturbed by the lamentations of the flesh, which alone is to perish. If only our will be one with the Divine will, it cannot fail to triumph, for then the will of God is also ours. Let our courage rise higher and higher, even with that "hope against hope" whereby so many "have conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, become valiant

in battle, put to flight the armies of the stranger." These words of St. Paul should encourage you, for you also, despite your weakness, can do all that was done by those of whom the Apostle speaks. Their God is our God, always *infinite* in goodness, yesterday, to-day and the same for ever.

I should never finish were I to say all that comes into my mind on this subject, but this may suffice. For the rest do what you can to restore your health; take a proper amount of exercise and rest, suitable food, &c. Do your work quietly, be careful without disquietude, try to look on the bright side of things, and drive away gloomy thoughts, taking an innocent pleasure in the many blessings which surround us in the Institute; the graces, I mean, bestowed on men by means of these poor servants of God. Finally let Mary be for us all the Mother of consolation, the joy of life. I beg you to recommend to her your poor Superior,

A. R.

CLXI.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

He exposes the source of his temptations and suggests a remedy.

Stresa,

February 6th, 1847.

My dear son in Christ,

The sole cause of your temptations and failings is the fact that you do not keep steadily before you the supreme principle which ought to direct you in all things, the final end of your vocation and of the Institute, the *perfection* taught by Jesus Christ. Instead of concentrating your attention on this, you allow your imagination to wander and be led astray by feelings which are human, trifling, fastidious, to the immense detriment of your spirit. Every one of us should control his feelings and direct the interior acts of his soul by this rule: "I wish to feel and think and will what is most perfect. This is the wealth I have come to seek and to possess; no other is worth having, nothing else is of any importance; as long as I do my duty for Christ's sake I am content."—By keeping this sublime principle in mind (without which no member of the Institute can correspond faithfully to the grace of the Divine vocation or make sure of saving his soul) you may subdue your spiritual enemies and begin to give proof of genuine Christian virtue. You will then with the Divine assistance become another man, to your own happiness and the unspeakable joy of your Superior.

You have now lived several years in the Institute, and this great principle ought to be impressed, nay, deeply graven on your soul. When you pray, let it be the main object of your petitions to obtain this great light

from God, this resolute determination without which you will be ever wavering, ever groping in the dark.

Meditate upon the 10th of the *Spiritual Lessons* and let your prayer be modelled on its teachings. When once you have a real love of perfection, every other affection and especially self-love will be subdued and brought into subjection. Then you will give no more trouble to Superiors, you will be docile and perfectly obedient, performing cheerfully every appointed task, without pretensions to this office or that, you will do anything and everything for the love of God, with alacrity and diligence, consistency and steadfastness of purpose. Then you will receive reproofs and admonitions with unbounded gratitude, and humiliation with relish; you will be gentle, humble, recollected, mortified, desirous of making daily progress and of accumulating merit, of practising mortification and every other virtue: for these are the things sought after and longed for by the man whose only intent is to render himself perfect in God's sight and like unto Christ. This indeed is what we all have in view, what we have bound ourselves to do by a sacred promise. This path cannot lead us astray, but the course you have followed hitherto, the course traced out for you by your imagination, your complaints and paltry human reasonings, and your passions—whither think you does it lead? It is a perilous, painful path and it will lead you astray. "There is a way which seemeth right to a man and the ends thereof lead to death."

I am deeply grieved by the way in which you seek to justify yourself for thinking of forsaking your holy vocation and quitting the Institute. You say among other things: "There are a great many Christians who are leading a holy life in the world." True, but a holy life in the world is not for those who sacrilegiously abandon the religious life to which they have been called, as you have been; it is not for those who, after remaining several years in holy Religion, have not learnt to love it as their only treasure; much less is it for such as break asunder those bonds of love, those chains of gold, their perpetual vows. These persons, whether

they bring upon themselves the sentence of dismissal or obtain a legal dispensation by their importunity, bear upon them a fearful *mark of eternal reprobation*. Those words, "pay thy vows to the Most High," will one day be the eternal condemnation of many, many deluded persons, who after being unworthy Religious, blinded by their passions and especially by arrogant presumption, have persuaded themselves that they might be as good Christians in the world. Unhappy, miserable men! They may perhaps stifle the remorse of conscience by means of frivolous excuses, but they will not elude the just sentence of the Divine Judge to whom they have been false, and that with so much cowardice and ingratitude. I would fain hope that what you have said is due merely to ignorance, and that God will enlighten you. God grant it, this is my earnest prayer! But if you wish to obtain this grace, you must no longer be so cold and lifeless, you must love perfection, you must seek it, and it alone with every thought and word and deed; you must begin to enter more deeply into the spirit of the Institute which has no other object, no other treasure than holiness of life. You must start from the very beginning and study our Rules and ponder them with the spirit of God, with a heart glowing with charity, longing to do only what Christ has done, to follow Him in His afflictions and the torment of His Cross. If your heart is not full of love, you will never be satisfied either with yourself or with others; you will never be at peace, never be content with your occupations, or receive grace to be made steadfast in your vocation. It is for us to make our vocation sure by faithful correspondence with the same, and to obtain the strength we need in order to be faithful unto death. In fine, I advise you to cultivate these three things: *the love of perfection, prayer and obedience*: no other principles should hold sway in us. May God bless and enlighten you!

A. R.

CLXII.

TO DON PIETRO BERTETTI AT TORTONA.

He shows how reasonable a thing is religious obedience.

Verona,

April 22nd, 1847.

I gather from your letter that our All-wise and All-loving Lord is so working within and without you, as to effect your complete detachment from the world, and your consecration to Him and to that charity which is God Himself. "God is charity." To Him alone be honour and glory! I desire and pray that He may bestow on all mankind, as on you, the inestimable grace of doing His will on earth as the blessed do in heaven! Pay no attention to what is said, even by good people and *sub specie boni*, to discourage and divert you from that holy purpose, which has never yet been inspired by the enemy of souls. If the attraction cannot possibly come from the spirit of darkness it must come from above: have no doubt about that.

You ask me for some arguments in proof of the advisability of submitting to perfect obedience, as practised in the Institute of Charity. I could write a book on the subject if I had time, but here are a few of the chief reasons:

1st. The constant sentiment of the Church and of all the Saints in all ages, and to mention two names only, of St. Basil who gathered together the traditions of the East and St. Benedict who represents Western tradition.

2nd. The words of Jesus Christ: "He that heareth you, heareth Me." These words have always been applied to religious obedience *unto the shedding of one's blood*, inasmuch as the superiors of Institutes approved by the Holy See receive their authority from the Church as defined in the Rules.

3rd. The fact that the obedience which is set before us is the greatest *humiliation* and *self-renunciation* of which man is capable, and therefore involves the complete fulfilment of those words of Jesus Christ, "He that will come after me, let him deny himself." Hence it has an intrinsic merit quite independent of the occasion on which it is practised, and apart from the discretion or indiscretion of the command, provided there is nothing unlawful in the thing commanded. Moral excellence is found in the act itself, not in the circumstance which called it forth: and perfection consists in seeking only real excellence, moral worth.

4th. Humility, which is a Christian virtue intrinsically good and perfect, begets a lowly esteem of self and a proportionately high esteem of others. It persuades us to yield to another's opinion, though it be contrary to our own, hence it leads us to *obedience*, in which there is always contained an act of humility: obedience to all men, as St. Francis of Sales says, but much more to lawful Superiors.

5th. Perfect obedience of *many* persons to *one* is the only means by which charity towards our neighbour can be practised on the largest possible scale, and the grandest enterprises be accomplished for the glory of God and His Church. Why so? Because a society, well-organized and controlled by a single mind, becomes a powerful instrument which does far more work than could be effected by the isolated efforts of individuals. Thus a regular army is immensely stronger than scattered combatants without mutual support or common direction. It would evidently be folly for soldiers to leave the ranks, either because they did not approve of the orders given, or because they fancied they could do more, when free and isolated. They might do more in one sense, they would probably be more fatigued, but they would effect much less, indeed they would be throwing away their lives. The same may be said of the host of the Lord. Isolated individuals, however energetic they may be, cannot do the

work of societies, strong in the union of obedience. We must remember that perfection consists in an efficacious desire to do or to procure the greatest amount of good for our neighbour's benefit and for the glory of God and His Church. Therefore we cannot reach the height of perfection unless we unite in an association, bound together by obedience, the bond of unity. Everything must give way to this consideration, if the desire of good, all good, the greatest amount of good is really that which lives in and dominates our souls. A man who does not adopt this means, whereby the greatest possible good can be procured, is not perfect.* This forcible and evident reason for yielding entire obedience carries with it greater weight when applied to a Society which has for its object *charity* in its immense universality, the *commandment of Christ* without restriction. The objection that a Superior might err in commanding, has no weight in comparison with this supreme argument, because even though some mistake be made by this or that Superior, it is still certain that the society, considered as a whole, effects more good than could be attained by individuals acting separately. Moreover these individuals are liable to make mistakes, and they are the more likely to go wrong in proportion as they are independent, unsupported, and wanting in humility.

6th. When it has been shown that entire obedience is a thing intrinsically good and perfect, and that it contains in the highest degree the Christian virtues of humility, self-abnegation and charity towards one's neighbour, it follows that the obedient man is under the protection of God Himself, whom he means to obey and does in fact obey in the person of the Superior, because the man who does all for God, has God for his guide. "The Lord hath guided the just man by right paths." The obedient man puts his trust in God, and this confidence can never be confounded, for God "doth not put

* What the author says must be understood of a person who is called to the Religious state, and who is able to embrace it. (Editor)

them to confusion who hope in Him." Obedience, then, on the one hand is an act of perfect faith and of hope in God, and on the other it carries with it the certainty that it cannot fail to promote in the highest degree the happiness of the obedient man, for this is always the object God has in view in the guidance of those who abandon themselves to Him. God therefore leads him nearer and nearer every day to his true end, and to this end all things alike may become instruments in His hands, aye, even the mistakes of Superiors, which would not be permitted, if they were not occasions of virtue and merit for the obedient man who is under God's special care. So if the Superior occasionally makes mistakes, there is no error on the part of God, who permits the mistake only in so far as it will turn to the advantage of him who obeys. For the rest, God enlightens Superiors, bestowing on them the gift of wisdom precisely in that measure which is needful for obtaining the *maximum* of good for the obedient, the highest degree of sanctity to which corresponds an equally high degree of glory. Hence the Holy Spirit says emphatically: "The obedient man shall sing of victories."

These, my dear brother and companion in Christ, as I may now call you, are a few of the arguments which you asked me to set before you. In the letter of St. Ignatius on Obedience which I advise you to read, you will find additional matter for your instruction and delight. He shows clearly that obedience though entire is never *blind*; it is blind in that it is not guided by human reasons, but it is not blind with respect to *Divine reasons*: it renounces mean and paltry considerations, but never loses sight of the great, universal, supernatural reasons. By obeying, we may sometimes fail as regards some secondary object, but we cannot possibly be disappointed of reaching our final and absolute end, that which alone is true and gives value to other things. Therefore let us rejoice in the Lord that we have found the *treasure hidden in the field*.

A. R.

CLXIII.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

He exhorts him to overcome temptation by means of prayer and humility.

Verona,

June 9th, 1847.

My dear son in Christ,

All things can be gained by humble, intense and persevering prayer. Give yourself to prayer and direct your petition to the obtaining of that true light which gives us knowledge of things supernatural, and thus you will see prostrate at your feet the enemies that lie in wait for your soul; you will save your soul and you will secure Evangelical Perfection. It is in vain that a religious hopes to save his soul if he forsakes the path and the rules of perfection. That which is a mere counsel for ordinary Christians is a matter of obligation in his case. I will say to you in the words of Scripture (which are applied by the Fathers to the present subject) "Do therefore, my son, what I say and deliver thyself. . . Run about, make haste, stir up thy friend. Give not sleep to thy eyes, neither let thy eyelids slumber. Deliver thyself as a doe from the hand, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler." When once you have obtained heavenly light by means of humility and prayer, the peace of your soul will be lasting, for you will give yourself with all the energy of your soul and with entire renunciation of your own judgment unto holy *obedience* as to a safe refuge; to complain or to feel melancholy, dejected or angry on account of the conduct of Superiors in your regard will inspire you with horror; you will shrink from all such things deeming them to be

sin and folly. Nay, henceforth your only thought will be how best to accomplish all that is enjoined with great tranquillity and delight, conforming yourself in the manner of so doing to the Superior's way of thinking as to the undoubted expression of the Divine will.

With all my heart I beg of our Lord that through His bounty you may understand your holy Rules, wherein you will find all this doctrine, and love them as your only and infinite treasure. Indeed in the practice of virtue as enjoined by the Rules of the Institute we find God, for the rules are the words of God and of Christ, and when a man lives by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, he lives by God. But in order to obtain this great grace, it behoves us to clear away altogether the obstacle of pride, of presumption and of that weak self-indulgence which prompts a man, instead of constantly humbling himself and acknowledging his misery as he ought, secretly to make excuses and to justify himself. Thus he blinds himself and can no longer discern his own failings. One who is thus blind imagines that he sees and this is precisely why his delusion is so deplorable and fatal. Have recourse to prayer therefore, strive hard to humble yourself at the feet of all men and to taste the spiritual delight contained in self-abasement. The saints were insatiable in their longing for humiliation and this was why God raised them from *strength to strength*, from grace to grace, from light to light. The thoughtful reading of the Lives of the Saints greatly helps to prepare the mind for understanding these truths. God bless you and may my desire be fulfilled of having in you a true Brother of Charity *dead to yourself*, a fit instrument in the hands of God and of your Superiors unto the Divine glory. Adieu!

A. R.

CLXIV.

TO SISTER MARY AGNES AND SISTER MARY GERTRUDE
AT LOUGHBOROUGH.

He exhorts them to make progress in sanctity.

Stresa,

October 16th, 1847.

The charity of Jesus Christ pervading the letters you have sent to me through Father Provincial, gave me that consolation which it produces whenever its presence is felt. The spirit of Jesus Christ is a spirit of love and consolation. It unites men living in different climes and draws together the hearts furthest apart. You are specially present to my mind in time of prayer and during the Holy Sacrifice; and I hope that I am also remembered by you, above all in the precious moments of prayer. Trust in God, my dear daughters: He is in the midst of you, He is your strength and your glory. Be brave and dauntless in Him, rise superior to the weakness of your sex, persevere with constancy in the vocation God has given you: cherish an earnest desire of doing all the good you can to your neighbour. Above all let it be your aim to divest yourselves of all those worldly notions which cling to us like pitch, substituting for them the sentiments of Christ, and holding in highest esteem, as true wisdom, Christian humility and child-like simplicity. The Novices have sent me a picture representing the Blessed Trinity, in which I admire the skill and diligence of the artist and appreciate this token of their filial affection. I beg you to thank them in my name. May our dear

Lady whose Purity we honour to day obtain for you the blessing of her Son and our Lord Jesus Christ !

A. R.

CLXV.

TO SISTER N. N. AT DOMODOSSOLA.

A remedy for diffidence and aridity of spirit.

Stresa,

January 24th, 1848.

My dear daughter in Christ,

You must fight hard against these thoughts of diffidence which are evidently a snare of the devil. It behoves you continually to increase your confidence in Jesus Christ: by persevering confidence you will be victorious over all your foes, or rather the grace of Jesus Christ will triumph in you. Only follow out the instructions you receive.

Prayer is always good. Even if you merely utter the words with your lips it will be a protest against the violence of your enemy. God sees and knows your motive in saying the words, and therefore He will hearken to you because you are doing your best.

Make acts of confidence and love of God and of Jesus Christ, and if you can do no more, repeat a thousand and a thousand times and never grow tired of repeating the Holy Name of Jesus your Saviour. At other times repeat constantly the name of Mary, calling to mind that she is your Mother and is well acquainted with your troubles and the needs of your soul. A good way of controlling the imagination is to write in large letters the names of Jesus and Mary, and keep them before your eyes and read them very frequently with humble love and confidence. I have great hopes that you will derive much benefit from this simple means, if you will practise it, making also frequent

protestations that you wish to die rather than offend God even by venial sin.

Thus little by little you will gain strength of will, and if your will, at least with the superior part of your soul, is firmly established in *good*, in the resolution of preferring God to all things, the violence you suffer will do you no harm, and even if you should receive some trifling hurt you will never be wounded unto death. On the contrary, I can assure you that it will all be to the very great advantage of your soul, and though you see no merit in your sufferings, God will reckon them as meritorious in His sight. I repeat, be never weary of calling upon the names of Jesus and Mary, and protest that you wish to be faithful to God, cost what it may.

I will not fail to pray for you especially, that God may help you. Have courage and confidence in God. Adieu!

A. R.

CLXVI.

TO SISTER M. BONAVENTURA AT CAMERI.

On Detachment.

Stresa,

February 23rd, 1848.

My dear daughter in Christ,

The good news you give me of yourself affords me much satisfaction. You have done right: this is the way to draw profit from the severance of earthly ties. The spirit in which you left Stresa renders such separations most useful; indeed, I know no better way of freeing ourselves from the last links that bind us to creatures and to earth, and hinder us from soaring to what is infinite and celestial. Pilgrims as we are on earth, what can we do better than keep ourselves ever in readiness to go to any part of the world, whithersoever our

Divine Spouse calls us? All the world is home to the servant of God, whose true home is heaven.

Rejoice in the good work which our Lord offers you an opportunity of doing: it will add to that treasure which can never perish. Adieu!

A. R.

CLXVII.

TO THE SAME.

On the duty of interpreting favourably the conduct of Superiors, and giving one's whole heart to God.

Stresa,

May 12th, 1848.

My dear daughter in Christ,

It is a great fault to exaggerate the defects of Superiors, and we thereby create temptation for ourselves. Blessed are they who put a favourable construction on everything that can be so interpreted, who regard the virtues and not the failings of their brethren (provided however that the latter be not confided to their care). We must remember that God permits superiors to fall into defects in order to give inferiors an opportunity of practising perfect virtue. When Superiors are imperfect, obedience becomes more meritorious, and our affection is less liable to delusion, for there is then some proof that we love God not man.

You do well to watch over your heart which should be wholly consecrated to God, your most loving Spouse. Do not refuse Him the least portion of your love. Those who love God in all men, love Jesus Christ in all men, but especially in those who are most needy and imperfect and possessed of fewer external qualifications. My dear daughter, be firmly persuaded that this visible world is one continual delusion: cherish unbounded love for things

invisible, virtue, grace and the tranquil enjoyment of celestial gifts. Remember me kindly to your companions; be always cheerful and easy to please. Adieu!

A. R.

CLXVIII.

TO DON GIACOMO MOLINARI AT VERONA.

*Of the approaching death of Don Boselli: his esteem for him.
On the care of souls.*

Rome,

September 23rd, 1848.

The news contained in your letter of the 12th inst. (which reached me yesterday) is a great blow to me. So then our dear Giovanni Boselli is soon to be taken from us, the companions of his earthly pilgrimage. He has had *full days* for work done for God: he has borne the burden and heat of the day, and the joyful serenity with which he bears his last illness is a token and a prelude of the recompense which the Lord of the Vineyard will confer on him: it is withal a source of unspeakable comfort to us and a great encouragement to follow in his steps. We have before us the example of his unwearied assiduity in the confessional and in all the other labours of the ministry for the salvation of souls; his patience known to few but well known to God; the rectitude of his intentions, the fervour of his zeal, the charity which made him all things to all men; his deep humility and utter indifference to human praise, which indeed he feared lest it should detract from the fulness of his reward. Yes, I knew this dear brother intimately, he was one of the first whose spirit I appreciated. I held him in profound veneration; many and many a time I have regarded him with holy envy. How often has he

confided to me heavenly thoughts and precious instructions! How often have I perceived that his spirit was illumined by flashes of Divine light, that light of the soul, which is the secret of the Saints! Ah! if while I write he has already entered into the possession of that good which alone he ever loved, let us not fail to keep his memory alive as a type of many and rare virtues, which God sets before us as a fruitful source of edification. As soon as the news reached me, I turned at once to God to offer Him the sacrifice He requires of my beloved companion, and to pray that if any trace of human infirmity still rendered him unworthy of the beatific vision, he might be wholly cleansed in the Blood of Christ and be received pure and immaculate into the bosom of God, and finally, I prayed that when our friend has happily been received into the Divine embrace, God may hearken to his prayers for us whom he has left still sojourning on earth.

But whilst the virtue, the fortitude and generosity of our friend shine out with brighter lustre and are more dearly prized in the hour of bereavement, shall we think of casting down the burden that God has laid on us? Shall we lose heart because we no longer have the assistance of the labourer who has finished his day's work and has entered into the rest and joy of his Lord? Are these feelings worthy of the sublime vocation to which God has deigned to call us? Does a valiant soldier think of quitting his post? Does he not choose to die rather than fail in his duty? What example did our Divine Leader, Jesus Christ, leave to those who mustered under His standard? Does the husbandman, after sowing his seed, give up all hopes of a good harvest when the winter comes and the ground is covered with ice and snow? Or does the vinedresser expect the grapes to be ripe in a single day, and not rather wait patiently and confidently for the sun to tinge and ripen them in the season appointed by the Author of Nature? Shall we be less patient and have less faith in Providence than the agriculturist, or indeed any

hardworking and sensible man of the world, who knows that there is a proper time for everything, and that the commencement of a lucrative enterprise requires great labour and expense, and that it will be a long time before he can expect to make any profit? Shall we be so foolish, so daring and presumptuous as to expect from God favours and graces and abundant fruit of souls gained for Him without hard toil and effort and strife and suffering on our part? Did God act thus with His Saints? Have we not read the lives of apostolic men and the story of their persevering toil, their unfailing confidence in the loving kindness of God, and how they endured anxiety and infirmity and sufferings of every kind in order to purchase together with Christ the souls they led to salvation? St. Paul goes so far as to say that they filled up those things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ? Certainly in point of merit nothing was wanting to His sufferings on which all our merit depends; but something was wanting before they could be *applied*. Jesus Christ Himself in His infinite goodness and wisdom has determined that, ordinarily, holy and apostolic men should by uniting their own sufferings with His, obtain the application of His merits to many souls that would otherwise perish. In this way He enables His servants to participate in all His glory, and not in part only, becoming as it were co-redeemers of the world. Blessed are they who understand this doctrine and make it their own! Those who are invited by Christ to the apostolic life or in any way legitimately called to the care of souls, are miserably deceived if they expect happiness in any other way than by the path of suffering.

These reflections, based on the word of God, should encourage you to remain firm at your post—*non excedas de loco tuo*—and prevent your being dejected at what seems to you the small result of your labours. Your flock should henceforth be all the more dear to you, after the example of that Good Shepherd who went in quest of us His lost sheep (caring not how much it cost Him of toil

and blood) and not content with bringing us back to the fold, has deigned to make us partakers of His own pastoral ministry. Call to mind the warning of Holy Scripture that "the inheritance gotten hastily in the beginning, in the end shall be without a blessing." It may be inferred from these words that contrariwise an inheritance will be blessed in the end if it be acquired by long waiting, labour and toil. Recollect that the house cannot be built without wisdom, nor consolidated without prudence nor enriched without doctrine, I mean by righteousness which is doctrine reduced to practice. Recollect also that the Scripture tells us that there is no wisdom without fortitude, no sound doctrine unless temptation be resisted stoutly. "By wisdom the house shall be built, and by prudence it shall be strengthened. By instruction the store-rooms shall be filled with all precious and most beautiful wealth. A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge stout and valiant."

It is my opinion and wish (which for you is equivalent to a manifest declaration of the Divine will) that with regard to our establishment at Verona, we should keep to that maxim of the Constitutions which enjoins perseverance in a work once begun, without being alarmed at the difficulties which are always more or less felt at the outset. These difficulties in fact are useful and necessary in the order of Divine Providence, in order that we ourselves by trusting in God and valiantly sustaining the conflict may move Him to grant stability to our work. We must therefore renew our strength by means of prayer and all other spiritual exercises, for if we lose heart we cannot fail to sink beneath the waves. It behoves us to rouse ourselves and work more manfully than in the past, with greater fervour and zeal, with increased power and energy. We must be careful also not to fetter ourselves by excessive caution, because this might prevent our doing some good and enlarging the sphere of our action. So you see it is your duty cheerfully and readily to take up the cross destined for you by God, who

makes use of the weakest instruments and if need be lends them aid and strength. Make one good resolution to complete your sacrifice, and then do not let your thoughts return to it, but think only how it may be accomplished.

It is important that Don Mazzotti and Don Aimo should obtain faculties for hearing confessions. If with God's grace, the example of your own pastoral zeal and sound instruction, you succeed in the course of a few years in training one of these young priests to take your place, then you will have some right to ask to be relieved of your burden should advancing years render it more grievous. At present you have not begun to endure the burden, and it is only your imagination that makes you fear it. But to reject a burden whose weight you have not borne, whose sweetness you have not experienced, is not consistent with the perfection of your state, nor with the imitation of that type to which all Christians are bound to conform their lives. I have alluded to the sweetness you have not experienced, because the life of the good pastor, full as it is of trials and sorrows, has nevertheless its secret delights, so exquisite as to exceed all the bitterness. Think too of the great glory reserved for the faithful pastor. How much greater is it than the glory of ordinary Christians, how much more dazzling! For pastoral charity being directed towards our Lord Himself is far more excellent than ordinary charity. Listen to what Christ said to Peter and apply it to yourself; Peter, lovest thou Me? If thou dost love Me feed My sheep.

In order that you may assist your parishioners in soul and body, you will find it necessary to enter into relations with the best Catholic families, and I will send you some letters of introduction. In this way you will be able to gain relief for the poor people, who must be very dear to your heart; almsgiving will pave the way by degrees to the exercise of spiritual charity. In this matter, charity must be ingenious and bold, without any false shame. So I urge you to ask for alms from the most wealthy and pious gentlemen of the town in pressing necessities, such

as the rescue of some girl, the education of a child, &c. You will thus be able to feel your way, and people will find out that there are zealous priests at St. Zeno's who have a care for the poor.

I have just received your second letter of the 13th inst, which does not require any further answer. I am glad to know the nature of our dear Don Boselli's illness, though you give me no details concerning it. Once more I bid you take courage in the Lord: try to fulfil the expectations which the Institute and I myself have formed concerning you. You will succeed if you live by that faith which is the very life of the just man and renders our hearts great and generous, that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for." Adieu!

A. R.

CLXIX.

TO THE DEACON CONSTANTINE COMOLLO AT STRESA.

On the difference between the vow and the virtue of obedience.

Rome,

November 9th, 1848.

Your difficulty about obedience is easily solved. We must distinguish between the *virtue* and the *vow of obedience*. The vow has reference only to the express commands of Superiors, and not to the Rules. The virtue of obedience embraces everything: by transgressing the Rules (except those that concern the matter of the vows or include the commandments of God) a religious does not violate his vow, but he loses the great merit of perfect obedience. This has been so ordained in order not to lay an excessive burden on the conscience, and to enable each one of us to attain perfection by the path of spontaneous and generous love. If

love does not induce us to observe our Rules with exactness, if our hearts do not prompt us to desire to please God in every little action, what can supply the place of love? This is our true vocation, to love God with our whole heart and our neighbour as ourselves. We should rouse ourselves therefore and cherish in our hearts an intense love of God, and thus we shall find the happy solution of all difficulties.

Love is enkindled and nourished by prayer and intimate union and intercourse with God. Set due value on Divine grace, long for it, seek to obtain it in the most copious abundance and by every possible means. In this way a member of the Institute of Charity must become diligent, earnest and exact in keeping the Rules which will lead him to imitate Jesus Christ most closely and finally to share in His glory. This is the lesson I beg you to teach the Novices, now that God has placed you in a position to do so. Guide them by the way of love, teach them to become enamoured of the beauty of Christian virtue as portrayed in our Rules, make them cultivate that interior and exterior mortification without which no one can be an observant religious. Study the Rules thoroughly, illustrating them by passages from Holy Scripture, especially the Gospel, and also by sentences of the Holy Fathers; and lay up a goodly treasure of spiritual erudition, so that you may be able to nourish now with milk and now with solid food the chosen souls that God entrusts to your care. Pray and ask prayers for

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

A. R.

CLXX.

TO SISTER BONAVENTURA ROSMINI AT DOMODOS-
SOLA.

He encourages her to sanctify herself and others.

Rome,

November 13th, 1848.

I must send a few lines also to my dear daughter in Christ, Sister Bonaventura. What shall I say? First and foremost, that you must accept lovingly and bravely all the duties that Divine Providence assigns to you through your Superiors. I am glad you are Assistant to the Mistress of Novices, because you will better appreciate the necessity of acquiring true religious spirit and fervour, in order that you may have something to communicate to all the Novices who are being trained for the service of God. Courage then, that you may become a Saint, and that you may acquire great charity and that mortification without which we cannot work cheerfully for our neighbour! Let us ever keep in view the glory of God, the example and words of Christ and the happiness of Heaven; so shall we run in the way of the Divine commandments. Have no fear of my forgetting you my daughters in the Heart of Jesus Christ. Do you also remember me, and pray continually for your affectionate Father,

A. R.

CLXXI.

TO DON FRANCESCO PUECHER, AT STRESA.

He exhorts him to greater confidence in God.

Naples,

February 13th, 1849.

My dear brother in Christ,

I have received almost simultaneously three letters from you, bearing the dates of the 9th and 22nd of January and the 2nd of February. Your letters are generally characterised by anxiety and disquietude, which are unbecoming the servants of God. We must rest tranquilly like infants in the arms of the Lord. If we do not, we are deficient in faith and in the confidence due to our Heavenly Father, and we ought to exert ourselves to make acts of generous faith, humbly asking for this precious gift. It is unwise to deliberate prematurely upon remote contingencies because such deliberation is inadequate to cope with difficulties not clearly foreseen. I hope you will try to become stronger and more tranquil; you must pray to the God of strength to save you from "the spirit of pusillanimity and tempest."—Calm your apprehensions, if you have not already done so.

A. R.

CLXXII.

TO DON GIOVANNI BATTISTA PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

On the care of the brethren.

Caserta,

July 3rd, 1849.

Your letter of the 12th of June, has reached me at Caserta, bringing me news of ill-health in the Community. There are certain precautions which should be taken in a damp climate. 1st, To see that all wear flannel summer and winter. 2nd, To avoid becoming overheated by walking too fast, &c. 3rd, When overheated either through preaching or any other cause to guard against a chill. 4th, To take light food. 5th, To see that the house is sufficiently warmed in the winter, and to be well-covered when going out. 6th, To avoid undue exertion in the matter of speaking, teaching, &c. 7th, In the case of those who spit blood to apply appropriate remedies and avoid all exertion, either physical or spiritual. For the rest let us trust in God. He has always supplied our needs, and He will provide in future in consequence of our lively faith and the prayers we shall address to Him.

I should much like to see you in Italy this year, and talk over many things. But how can we manage it? I am still unsettled, and I see little prospect of the affairs of the Holy See being settled so soon. I am thinking if anything happens to me, of returning to my dear solitude at Stresa; but even this is uncertain. I will let you know as soon as anything is decided.

At Rome they have taken the horses I had bought and other things probably of greater value. I left Antonio Carli there but I have heard nothing of him for some time.

May our Lord be blessed ! Let us have great confidence, my dear brother, and then we shall never be confounded no matter what men may do. We must have great faith: our Lord permits temptations and tribulations in order to rouse and increase our faith: "this is the work of God, that you believe in Him who sent Me." Don Toscani is my only comfort in these trials. With unceasing prayer and with joy let us abandon ourselves to the infinite goodness of God ; so shall we attain *the end of our souls, life everlasting*. If you receive this, let me know immediately. I owe two letters to dear Bertetti, whom I love and embrace tenderly in the Lord. I began an answer to his first letter in which he mentioned some difficulties, but I was interrupted. Tell him to have patience. Embrace all the dear brothers in Jesus Christ, in whom we are one heart and one soul.

Your affectionate,

A. R.

CLXXIII.

TO DON MOLINARI AT VERONA.

Of the prohibition of his works and the deferring of the Cardinalate.*

Albano,

September 14th, 1849.

My dear brother in Christ,

In answer to your letters of the 2nd and 7th inst. I can only say that there is no reason to be afflicted at the prohibition of my two little works, because sin is the only real calamity. My intention in writing was good, as my conscience bears witness. We must submit sincerely to the Decree, and take this event also as occurring by the permission of a most loving Providence. If I found myself obliged to incur heavy expenses in order to accept the Cardinalate which was not conferred on me owing to the flight of the Holy Father from Rome, if, as I now believe, the dignity never will be conferred on me, this is of no consequence, for it does us no harm and may even assist us to attain our end. If it be a disgrace in the sight of man, who will think us guilty of some great misdeed, we must remember that we should be equally disposed to serve Jesus Christ "by good report and by evil report." Let us be quiet and rejoice if we are humbled and made to suffer something in imitation of Jesus Christ. When the Pope first made mention of the Cardinalate our dear and holy brother Gentili wrote these beautiful words: "*My Father, remember the purple, with which they covered the*

* The treatises alluded to were entitled: "Delle cinque Piaghe della Santa Chiesa" and "La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale" these are the only works of Rosmini on the Index.

shoulders of Jesus Christ." His words seem almost prophetic. I hope that our dear Institute will not suffer from these events, and if it do suffer, it will only be to arise more beautiful and more glorious in the Lord.

As for me, have no anxiety. I do not know yet whether I shall remain, nor for how long; I should like to know the mind of the Holy Father more explicitly before leaving. May God bless you all! I embrace you tenderly in our Lord Jesus Christ in whom I am

Your affectionate brother,

A. R.

CLXXIV.

TO DON GIUSEPPE FRADELIZIO AT STRESA.

His views concerning those who lose their vocation. On the prohibition of his works.

Albano,

September 16th, 1849.

My dear brother in Christ,

I am grieved indeed to see a brother, unmindful of the fidelity vowed to God Himself, fall from his appointed place; such a fall should inspire in us all a wholesome fear of the Divine judgments. Nevertheless my grief is mitigated by the reflection that the Institute is the gainer rather than the loser, being purified and strengthened by such departures. At the same time we must pray for the poor brother, as charity itself requires, in order that our Lord may touch his heart and bring him to true repentance.

From your memorandum of the 6th of August, I gather that some of the dear Novices make greater progress than others, but that on the whole you are satisfied with all, for which I thank our Lord.

As to the prohibition of my two works, do not distress yourself: God has permitted it: "may the name of the Lord be blessed." I am content because I only seek the will of God, wherein is contained our only treasure, and where our heart should be. Remember me to our friends, especially the Abate Branzini to whom I will write shortly. May our Lord shower His blessings upon you, upon the Novitiate and the Institute !

A. R.

CLXXV.

TO DON MICHELE PARMA AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He draws motives of gratitude to God from his altered circumstances.

Albano,

September 16th, 1849.

My dear Don Michele,

I know well that you never forget me, as you on your part know that I never forget you: we both feel that no distance can separate those who are one in Jesus Christ. I thank you none the less for your sympathy in the strange and well-nigh incredible vicissitudes through which I am led by Providence, whose immutable counsels are never made void. Meditating on the designs of Providence, I am filled with admiration; admiring, I love, loving, I celebrate its praises; celebrating its praises, I render thanks; and in giving thanks I am filled with joy. How can it be otherwise when faith and reason, together with my intimate conviction, assure me that all that happens whether willed or permitted by God, is the effect of eternal, infinite, essential love? And who can find fault with love?

The disappointment of which you speak, caused by the aspect of affairs, is another proof of the goodness of God, for whilst we have had an occasion of humiliation, the altered condition of things has removed the false glare that dazzled us, and we have received a memorable lesson of prudence and of wisdom, which is acquired only by a practical and often rude experience. Be of good heart then in the Lord, and seek to become ever more active in His service, more constant in your faith, according to the spirit of that Institute to which by God's grace you belong. Let this faith be practical and humble; let obedience make you one with your superiors who hold the place of God in your regard, and let charity make you one with your companions, in accordance with the admirable advice of St. Paul: "bear ye one another's burdens and so shall you fulfil the law of Christ." The defects of others must not weaken nor cool charity. Humility will persuade us to see in ourselves greater defects than in others, and to believe that we are a greater burden to them than they can be to us.

The philosophy classes which you will resume this autumn will be sanctified and sweetened by the thought that this is a work of charity, the work God requires from you. What an incentive to apply to this work with diligence, industry, and patience, whether you seek to become possessed of truth or to find the expressions and means best adapted to form the youthful minds created for truth, the ingenuous hearts created for virtue!

We are living quietly in this delightful spot with Don Giuseppe and Brother Antonio. We do not know when the Holy Father will re-enter his States and capital; and if the affair is protracted as seems probable, we count on returning to Stresa where I shall learn the Holy Father's wishes, which is equivalent to saying, the will of God. The prohibition of my two works at Naples seems to indicate that the Holy Father regrets having kept me in Rome for the sake of raising me to the sacred purple. However, as he has given me no sign of any such regret, and indeed assured me at Gaeta that his intention was unchanged, I

cannot tell what will be the end of this strange business. So I go on waiting, but in any case, whether I come to know positively that the Holy Father has changed his mind (as seems probable), or the matter remains in abeyance, I shall probably return to my dear brothers and fellow-servants in our Lord Jesus Christ. Beseech Him therefore to sustain and guide me at every step by His grace, that I may do all things in accordance with His spirit, because "they who are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God." Adieu! Remember me to Father Provincial, to the Rector Don Gagliardi and all my dear brothers engaged with you in the service of God. Don Giuseppe and Antonio salute you.

A. R.

CLXXVI.

TO DON GIOVANNI BATTISTA PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

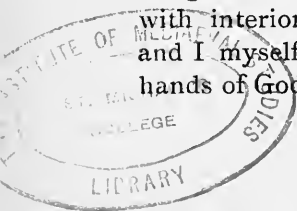
Of the prohibition of the two works, and of the Cardinalate.

Albano,

September 25th, 1849.

My dear brother in Christ,

When I wrote to tell you my two works had been placed on the Index, I was aware that the Decree had been drawn up on the 30th of May, and confirmed by the Pope on the 6th of June, because the Master of the Sacred Palace had written officially to enquire whether I submitted to the sentence. Although the news was quite unexpected, it did not disturb me; I prayed to God, and He gave me grace to submit, not only without difficulty, but even with interior consolation, considering that the Institute and I myself will thus realize more fully that we are in the hands of God, in whom we will rest.



No reason was given me for the prohibition; but since books are sometimes prohibited not because they contain errors, but as a wise precaution in order to withdraw from the public doctrines that might be misunderstood; it is very likely that this is the reason why my works have been prohibited. Books are sometimes removed from the Index on a second examination, as in the case of Malebranche, whose works were taken off the Index after their defence by Cardinal Gerdil. The same may be said of works that taught the motion of the earth round the sun. But the voice of authority has spoken and that is enough: we shall always abide by its decisions. At the same time we should arouse our faith and confidence in God, and stand firm as a rock in our reliance on His infinite goodness and providence. Let us place ourselves and the Institute under the shadow of His wings, and go on labouring cheerfully without being frightened or discouraged, for His glory and our brethren's good. We must beg this confidence and holy courage from God Himself, for He will surely grant what we ask. "Fear not little flock." I have a sense of contentment such as I had not before the condemnation: my conscience does not reproach me: but it is "God that judgeth." When we are humbled, let us humble ourselves still more, and we shall be exalted: this is the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

I will forego the consolation of seeing you again, if your coming to Italy might be prejudicial to the holy work on which you are engaged and which God has manifestly placed in your hands. I should have liked to say much that cannot be put on paper. Your petition to the Pope, even though it comes rather late will produce a good effect. There is something great coming, great I mean from our point of view, for in themselves the designs of God are always great, nay infinitely great.

I will write to you about the other matters from Piedmont, whither I expect to return, for we shall probably hear no more about the Cardinalate which

the Pope obliged me to accept. I am glad to be relieved of the burden were it not for the dishonour, but the disgrace is made bearable by the thought that our Lord Jesus Christ endured far greater ignominy, and that He knows what degree of honour will best enable us to serve Him. Our dear brother Don Luigi was a true prophet, for when he heard of the intended promotion he warned me *to remember the purple rag with which the shoulders of Jesus Christ were covered*. Courage then! I shall start for Piedmont within a fortnight, but I shall stay a few days at Florence on the way. Pray, pray, pray. God bless you all!

A. R.

CLXXVII.

TO DON GIUSEPPE GAGLIARDI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Advice on the government of the College.

Stresa,

November 20th, 1849.

My dear brother in Christ,

At length I can spend a few moments with you, as I have long desired. I received your letter of the 1st of April, in which you informed me of the state of the College and the good work the Brothers are doing, and the account you gave me is on the whole consoling. I know you are doing your best to further God's work, and I am confident that by earnest and persevering effort you will set right whatever is still imperfect. How I long to see this establishment, which presents so large a field for the exercise of charity, flourishing and perfect! You must ask God to enable you to put life into the College and arouse your fellow-workers

to a holy enthusiasm, which serves to lighten toil and solace weariness. I should like all to understand the excellence of the work. If they do not set due value on the office of teacher, and regard it as a gift bestowed on them by God, it will be difficult to maintain always the requisite courage and alacrity. Urge them all to study our holy Rules and make every effort to keep up observance of the same, both in the letter and in the spirit. I am anxious to come to see you, but I cannot fix a time as I shall probably be obliged to go to Casale on business connected with the Institute. If this journey can be dispensed with we shall meet the sooner, if not I will come later on, please God. Meanwhile I embrace you affectionately in our Lord.

A. R.

CLXXVIII.

TO DON FELICE SCESA AT S. MICHELE DELLA CHIUSA.

He recommends an important maxim.

Stresa,

November 24th, 1849.

I have read with pleasure, my dear brother in Christ, the report of your Community contained in your letter of the 17th inst. I gather from your statement that God fails not to accord His assistance and protection to this little company of His servants, as indeed He will never fail to do if we abide in Christ through uninterrupted prayer. Endeavour with all prudence to impress this great truth on our dear brothers: that a servant of God who is dissatisfied with his condition and aspires to something more exalted, is wanting in faith, because he ought to know by the light of faith, that his vocation and the duties assigned to him in the Institute are of incomparable

excellence, calculated, indeed, to extinguish every other desire and to inspire a boundless gratitude to the Divine Majesty. This is true of all the duties of the sacred ministry, but especially of the work of the Missions. If our brethren meditate carefully on this point they will be more tranquil and not desire any other occupation.

I am glad you are working at your studies; they will conduce greatly to make your labours of charity fruitful. We have need of much prayer. Let each one arouse his fervour and sustain by assiduous prayer the great work which the goodness of God has confided to us all. A thousand blessings to you!

A. R.

CLXXIX.

TO SISTER N. N. AT MALESCO.

He shows how foolish it is to repine at not being elected Superior.

Stresa,

December 1st, 1849.

My dear daughter in Christ,

Your letter informs me of the temptations to which God has allowed you to be subjected. It was a trial intended to purify your soul from any feeling of vanity or lurking pride. How is it possible for a Sister of Providence not to desire and accept with eagerness the lowest place in the house, seeing that her vocation is founded in humility? How can she so far presume on her own strength as to claim the office of Superior, when she ought to regard such an office as beset with perils, and desire to be subject to all her companions (even though younger than herself), imitating the humility of Mary her Mother? It is God who elects Superiors, and sometimes He does not choose a particular sister because He loves her and would

spare her a most heavy burden, and what is more, a grave responsibility. To be Superior it is not enough to be holy—and who can claim to be such?—great knowledge of human nature is also required. Who can tell how many faults you might have committed had you been elected? Can you possibly imagine you have sufficient judgment and discretion to govern a Community without making mistakes and staining your conscience with other people's faults as well as your own?

So you see that all these thoughts of yours were very foolish. But I excuse you, for I feel sure they did not come from you, but were a temptation of the devil. Be on your guard, my dear daughter, in future: close your heart once for all to such thoughts, and when your Superiors wish you to be a subject rather than a superior, consider it a matter for gratitude and a signal token of their affection, as indeed it is. Not out of vanity and presumption but only for obedience' sake must the office of Superior be accepted when it is conferred. Continue then to serve God with joy.

I thank you for your congratulations on my safe return. Do not cease to pray for me, that I may serve God better and bear with patience and resignation the heavy burden of the duties He has laid upon me.

A. R.

CLXXX.

TO DON GIOVANNI BATTISTA PAGANI AT RATCLIFFE.

Project for the foundation of a Missionary College.

Stresa,

December 14th, 1849.

You will have received two decrees sent to you by Gilardi. I will now reply to your letter, which I found awaiting me on my arrival at Stresa, after a long but prosperous journey of seventeen days. I am glad that Cardinal Franzoni's letter came to comfort you in the trial sent you by God. But it has given me much greater pleasure to see that Divine Providence shows itself favourable by manifest indications to your dearly-cherished project of a College in England for Foreign Missions.

Now I consider it most important to begin by establishing some fundamental principles for our guidance. I should like first of all to know what you think and feel, and in the meantime I will say something of my own views on the subject.

From what I have been able to observe, it seems to me that in training missionaries for their holy enterprise, two pernicious errors might easily render the work useless.

1st. The first of these errors lies in the false notion that God bestows the grace of the apostolic vocation very lavishly, whereas this being the most sublime of all vocations is not given to all, and requires faithful co-operation on the part of those to whom it is given. Their number can be increased only by prayer, since Jesus Christ has said: "the harvest indeed is great but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send labourers into His harvest." There is indeed

great scarcity of apostolic men, for none can be such without being in an eminent degree men of prayer and zealous in the preaching of God's word. "We will give ourselves to prayer." From all this we may conclude that only those few should be chosen for the work of Foreign Missions whose vocation has been well-tried, and who zealously correspond to it.

2nd. It is a mistake to imagine that foreign missionaries require all the analytical scientific knowledge that is imparted to our priests in Europe. In my opinion, we should try to find some method of training these missionaries after an Apostolic pattern. I should like to see practice and theory combined, the latter being considered in this case as the outcome of the former, rather than *vice versa*. We should strive to kindle or rather nourish in the candidates a great love of souls. I use the word nourish, because zeal, the gift of God and special token of their vocation, must be already implanted in their hearts. No one who is cold and selfish is fit for this work. I would have them first of all well instructed in all that pertains to public worship and the administration of the Sacraments. The Liturgy of the Church would thus provide a fund of theological doctrine as well as spiritual profit and delight. I should like them to have a great esteem and devotion to the study of Holy Scripture as the inspired Word of God, and especially of the Gospel. If they form the habit of reading and meditating on the Gospel, it will prove another fount of theological instruction. If in addition to this they had also at hand a compendium containing all the truths defined by the Church, a second compendium of Morals, and a third of Canon Law with special reference to the Hierarchy of the Church they might be considered ready for their work. They would require in addition such information and special knowledge as may be necessary for the particular Mission to which they are destined.

If God grant us the privilege of seeing this College founded, I think that its *alumni* should be devoted from the very beginning to some particular mission. It is desirable

in the first place to concentrate and not scatter our forces. Then, if we keep one mission only in view it will be possible to adapt the curriculum and general training to its peculiar needs, whereas it would be impossible I believe to prepare men adequately in one College for different countries. Our choice would lie I think between the British Possessions in America and in India. The American Mission seems to present fewer difficulties, as English is the language of the country, and the missionaries would merely have to learn, either on the spot or if possible before, the native dialects : of philosophy there would be little need. If, however, India is preferred, I think we should adopt a new method and make an assault upon the Brahmins. This cannot be done without a thorough acquaintance with their philosophy, as also with the Hindustani and Sanscrit languages. I believe the reason why so little has been obtained among the Hindoos is because they are so strongly attached to their Brahmins. Hence little or nothing can be done unless you direct your assaults against the Brahmins themselves ; and if you cannot convert them, you may at least hope to confute their doctrines and destroy their credit for wisdom by showing that the missionaries know all the Brahminical doctrines, and what is more, know how to confute them. I believe this to be the only way of converting India to the Faith. It means hard work and slow progress and will require men of great intellectual gifts, since these systems of philosophy are really marvellous, the very master-piece of error I might say. England would be a very suitable place for training missionaries versed in these doctrines, which indeed have been made known in Europe by the English, especially by their Society at Calcutta. But in due time we should have to send out our own missionaries, that is to say, when their religious spirit is more mature. They would require to be instructed in philosophy and more advanced theology and to be assisted by learned Oriental scholars of London or other Universities. I should like you to consider all these suggestions of mine and after praying to God for light, tell me whether you

think it better to undertake the training of missionaries for America or for India.

May God's blessing be upon us all!

A. R.

CLXXXI.

TO DON PIETRO BERTETTI AT RUGBY.

An answer to two questions : how far the preacher may rely on the help of God and how simplicity may be combined with prudence.

Stresa,

The Circumcision, 1850.

You ask me two subtle questions : one, how far you may rely upon the Divine assistance when preparing to preach, and the other, how simplicity may be combined with evangelical prudence. These are things that no man can teach, for God has reserved to Himself the instruction of His servants on such matters. And He teaches little by little, for this science or rather this wisdom is too sublime to be received by us all at once, ill-prepared as we are. It is a lesson no one has ever learnt perfectly, and when the Saints had spent all their lives learning it there was more left to learn. We must ask for this knowledge from the Master with tears and sighs, keeping our minds open to receive what He deigns to bestow, and the ears of our heart open lest we lose a syllable of His instruction. Heavenly doctrine is of such a nature that even were a man capable of reducing it to a theory and expressing it in words, his pupils would not understand him, did not God Himself open their minds with His light : and moreover they might misunderstand him, did not God direct their attention to the truth.

However, I can make some general remarks in answer to your questions. With regard to the first question, it is necessary to prepare carefully, especially in your case, first the matter and then the words, but without anxiety or disquietude. It is by excluding all preoccupation that we show our confidence in God, and this confidence excludes all anxiety about the result, but does not hinder diligence and study. We must forget ourselves and think only of our subject, i.e., the doctrine we are about to teach. As for the language in which to clothe our thought, this is a greater difficulty to some than to others: each one must apply himself to this point according to his own needs. I think you must have in England a copy of the excellent work I always recommend to our preachers: "Guide de ceux qui annoncent la parole de Dieu" (Chambéry, Puthod, 1829). It is a collection of precepts of the Saints concerning preaching; and you will find something apposite to your question.

As for the second question, that man is *simple* who always speaks the truth and aims at justice in all his thoughts, affections and actions. Such a man does not try to give a false impression of himself, nor make artful reflections to make the truth appear what it is not, but accepts truth such as it is, without any arbitrary interpretation or secondary ends. That man is simple who is not ashamed to preach the Gospel, even in the presence of those who consider it something weak or childish, and to confess it in all its entirety, on all occasions, simply because it is true. That man is simple who rather than make a rash judgment allows himself to be deceived and injured by his neighbour, who takes everything in good part, and never loses his serenity no matter how others behave to him. The simple man is sincerely humble. He is fully aware of his own shortcomings, but he is not afraid of recognizing with unbounded gratitude the gifts of God, without however, exaggerating them or ascribing them to his own merit.

But the *prudent* man knows how to keep back some

part of truth which it would not be opportune to disclose, when this can be done without prejudice to the truth of the statement made. By a judicious selection of means, by vigilance and energetic action, the prudent man is enabled to compass the good object he has in view. He foresees all possible contingencies and difficulties, those difficulties even that spring from his very caution, and selects that course which involves least danger and least difficulty. Having once set before himself some great and noble aim, the prudent man never loses sight of it: undeterred by obstacles, he directs his every action to this one end, and nothing that may prove serviceable is allowed to escape. In every transaction he distinguishes and seizes upon what is essential. By relinquishing what is accidental and secondary, he attains his end. By concentrating, and not scattering vaguely his forces, he brings them all to bear on what he has in view. Having done all this the truly prudent man looks for success to God alone, and asks it of Him, and wishes to succeed if God wishes it. If he fails, he does not grow cold or angry, nor repent, nor relent his efforts, content with having done his best and certain that he has not failed in his final end, which is no other than the will and the greater glory of God. You see, my dear brother, that simplicity in no way contradicts prudence, nor is prudence opposed to simplicity. Simplicity lies in love, prudence in thought. Love is simple, intelligence is prudent: love prays, intelligence watches: *watch and pray*: behold how prudence and simplicity are reconciled. Love is like the dove that sighs, the active intelligence is like the serpent that never falls to the ground, never hurts itself, because as it goes along it feels its way and surmounts the inequalities of the road.

May God bestow on my dear brothers a year full of merit and spiritual joy!

Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CLXXXII.

TO DON GIOVANNI BATTISTA PAGANI IN ENGLAND.

On the qualities required in the Presbyters of the Institute.

Stresa,

January 24th, 1850.

I have read with much pleasure the reports sent to me on the 30th of December and 10th of January.

I cannot accede to your request regarding the priest whom you recommend to me as worthy to take the vows of *Presbyter*. Nevertheless I hold him in great esteem and give full credence to your praise of his virtue. It is a maxim of our Constitutions that we should endeavour to retain in each class of members of the Institute some persons who are possessed of a good religious spirit and eminent virtue: and in consequence, some such persons should remain also among the *Spiritual Coadjutors*. No one should be raised to the rank of *Presbyter* unless he have in addition to other qualities, more than ordinary talent or at least more than ordinary erudition; and it is our duty to keep to this maxim more and more strictly as the Institute becomes better organized and more extended.

Taking into consideration all that you tell me, I feel sure that a College for Foreign Missions is out of the question, at the present time, when priests are so much needed in England. We must therefore turn our attention to founding a College of Itinerant Missionaries for England, Scotland and Ireland.

As for your own spiritual condition, all you have to do is to advance in the path you are now following, taking care never to allow any feeling of discouragement to come over

you. On the contrary you must gain new courage and confidence in that God who is your Father, that Christ of whom you are a member, that Holy Spirit through whom you live by the life of Christ. You ought not to overtax your strength, but do what human weakness strengthened by Divine grace, will allow. If you fail in religious observance, you can make compensation by confessing it humbly, acknowledging to God that you are what you are, and thanking Him that by His grace you are not worse. To know how to measure our own strength and adapt the burden accordingly is itself a light from God. Even the ass should not be too heavily laden. Peace and joy, then, and the love which casts out fear!

God grant the fire of His charity to all my brethren serving God in England!

A. R.

CLXXXIII.

TO THE SUBDEACON N. N.

On the evil of negligence in prayer. How the work of teaching may be sanctified.

Stresa,

February 4th, 1850.

My dear son in Christ,

It has caused me great pain to hear that you have become very remiss in spiritual things and negligent in prayer. If such be the case you should have great fear and tremble for yourself lest God should chastise you. He has been most generous to you. Besides making you a Christian, He has chosen you for His special service and withdrawn you from the world into a house consecrated to Him, I might almost say into His own palace, that is, the religious state. Now if

God is liberal He is also jealous, and expects that those whom He has gratuitously chosen for the highest posts in His kingdom, should appreciate His favour and not make light of it. This expectation is but ill-fulfilled in the case of those who are slothful and careless, and who find it tiresome to commune in prayer with Him, in whose converse there is no bitterness or weariness. If any one does not experience ineffable joy in holding colloquy with God, he betrays an ungrateful and hard disposition that is almost destitute of spiritual sense and incapable of discerning the infinite greatness, sweetness and goodness of that God whom he addresses. If he really desires what is good and true, he must of necessity experience great sorrow and alarm at finding himself so cold, unfeeling and senseless. He should not rest day or night till he has found sincere compunction, and has regained his relish and fervour in prayer and other devout practices. He will succeed, if he begins by overcoming himself and subduing the pride of the flesh by mortification and humility, and next, inures himself to the fatigue and effort required for prayer. This fatigue if borne with a good will and generously overcome, ceases after a time to be fatigue, and becomes a most delightful occupation which the fervent soul longs for as a hungry man craves for food. Therefore, my dear son, rise from the miserable state of tepidity into which you seem to have fallen. Renounce all attachment to self and all sluggishness, and like a good soldier resume with alacrity your holy practices of devotion, those especially that are in use amongst us, and more besides if you can arouse yourself to greater generosity than heretofore.

Consider that if we do not intend really to put in practice the teaching of Jesus Christ and to follow closely in His footsteps, it is idle and false to call ourselves His disciples, and the life we choose will lead us we know not where, certainly to nothing good. If therefore we do not wish to labour in vain and to have entered the Religious

State to no purpose, it behoves us to remember the words "pray without ceasing:" and again "watch and pray," and "ask and ye shall receive." We must give effect so to these words that instead of being a cause for condemnation, they may entitle us to reward and glory. We should likewise keep continually before our mind the picture of Jesus Christ passing the night in prayer on the mountain, or in the Garden of His agony and bloody sweat, or on the Cross. He is our living Exemplar, into whose likeness we continually strive to transform ourselves, doing in Him and by Him all that He did and is yet doing, "who sitting at the right hand of the Father maketh intercession for us." Let us not deceive ourselves. Without prayer a man cannot withstand evil nor keep united to God. He who prays little, does little good: he who prays much does a great deal. We are bound to do great things in virtue of our profession of a life devoted to charity. Hence we ought to pray much; if we do not we fail in our duty, we lose sight of our end, we feed on air, we cannot possess that charity to which we have devoted ourselves, the charity in which and for which we should perform our every action.

You will say that your office of teacher occupies you with profane studies and diverts your thoughts from the things of God.—Precisely on this account you ought to pray more earnestly and assiduously. You must pray that your office may prove innocuous to your soul and conducive to the spiritual welfare of your neighbour. You must obtain from God, by fervent and persevering prayer, such an abundance of charity as may sanctify your studies, and I may say, make them sacred and spiritual instead of profane. This will be the case if you apply yourself to them with deep humility of heart and self-contempt, with an upright and pure intention of serving God in your neighbour, especially in your pupils. If you are guided by a true and ardent zeal for the salvation of their souls you will be able to do much: a master can do good to souls in

many ways. Indeed, the Institute of Charity has, strictly speaking, no other motive in the work of teaching than this great end, wherein consists the charity of Jesus Christ. If our instruction or our work stops at literature or grammar or philosophy or any other branch of human knowledge and does not reach the Gospel in which is salvation, it would be like stopping half way on a journey, and never reaching the destination. This destination, the heavenly country towards which we are journeying and whither we would fain lead others also, cannot be reached without the help of God's grace, and this we cannot obtain without prayer. Prayer, on the other hand, is useless unless accompanied by mortification which overcomes the repugnance of the flesh, and without humility which makes a man abase himself interiorly and exteriorly as well, whilst he bends his neck under the sacred yoke of religious discipline and obedience.

I put these truths plainly before you, my dear brother, and the love I bear you in Christ, as is my duty, will induce me henceforward to watch over you with special attention, in order to see how you conduct yourself and what progress you are making in the spiritual life and the observance of our holy Rules. Were I to perceive that the office of Master, which I have confided to you, is an impediment to what is more important, nay the only thing that is important, the sanctification of your soul, I should not hesitate to recall you to the Novitiate. But I hope you will fulfil all my desires, watching over yourself, and giving yourself to the service of God with fresh courage and generosity. Such is the prayer and desire of your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CLXXXIV.

TO DON MICHELE PARMA AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On resignation in time of tribulation.

Stresa,

February 8th, 1850.

My dear brother,

I am grateful for the share you take in my afflictions and for the comfort of your sympathy. Truly I can say with the Psalmist: "I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth." Nevertheless in spite of so many causes of affliction, notwithstanding the waters that have risen and "have come into my soul," I try to keep ever before me that word of life which quickens the dead: "For in thee, O Lord, I have hoped; then thou wilt hear me, O Lord my God." He will listen, He will grant our petition if we pray, for this is indeed in a special way the time for prayer and supplication, for humble confession of our sins to God. Indeed, we ought to band ourselves together, as it were, and wrestle with God as Jacob did. So I expect you, dear Don Michele, to make a great effort to help me at this time, and suggest to the brothers that they should do the same. Let us live by faith: "He bowed the heavens and came down." Let us accept affliction as a salutary humiliation, but let there be no discouragement to make us cowards, nor any proud contempt, but rather respect and filial affection and obedience to authority that smites and chastises us according to the good pleasure of God, for other faults we have without doubt committed.

Manzoni often asks after you. Be of good courage in the Lord. Adieu!

A. R.

CLXXXV.

TO REV. MOTHER MARIA GIOVANNA ANTONIETTI
AT DOMODOSSOLA.

On confidence in God in the midst of difficulties.

Stresa,

February 10th, 1850.

Grieve not, my dear daughter, for the pure soul of Sister Adelaide is surely even now in the bosom of God. Let us raise our thoughts to Paradise, and nature's grief will be changed into supernatural joy. As for the many other tribulations wherewith at the present time God is pleased to try our faithfulness and train us to virtue, purifying withal our imperfections as by fire, we must endure them with resignation and constancy, my dear daughter, and not be discouraged or alarmed, much less turn cowards or sink into languor. God is with us, especially in time of trouble. Let us have faith. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able, but will increase our strength in proportion to our tribulation. St. Paul used to say he became weak with all the weak: this is the burden of Superiors, who are constrained by the great charity they are bound to profess, also to suffer and to bear all the ills and sufferings of their subjects. I have heard of the infirmities of some of the Sisters and recently too, of the malady with which Sister Gabriella is threatened. Let us have courage and bless the Lord in all things.

I wish you to take care of your health, my dear daughter. You will lose no merit thereby if you do it for the love of God, so do not tire yourself too much, but do everything quietly and peacefully. Leave what-

ever does not require your personal attention to one of your Assistants, and take a little rest with the pure intention of pleasing God and obeying your Superiors. Adieu.

A. R.

CLXXXVI.

TO N. N. A PRIEST.

He endeavours to inspire cheerfulness, and shows the importance of conquering antipathy to persons and things.

Stresa,

April 12th, 1850.

My dear brother in Jesus Christ.

“Wait on God with patience: join thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end.” Thus the Holy Spirit teaches us in the Book of Ecclesiasticus. The perusal of your letter has awakened a great compassion for you, my poor brother; I trust, however, that you will come forth victorious from the conflict and derive advantage for your soul. “This infirmity is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” Next week, if possible, I shall pay you a visit, and bring you back with me, leaving some one else to take your place in the school for a few days. I hope, with God’s blessing, the little change will do you good in body and soul.

For the rest, let us remember that we are placed in this world for a brief space in order that we may procure for ourselves an eternal abode where we shall rest after toil and trouble, and where nothing will ever cause us annoyance or weariness. If our thoughts are occupied with the great work which God has placed us here to accomplish, then that which in itself is troublesome and grievous will

appear most precious. Keeping before our eyes the infinite treasure of merit which lies concealed in affliction and suffering, we shall experience consolation and joy such as a miser cannot find in his heaps of gold. If, indeed, we look at ourselves or around us, it is but too true that we are *carrying vessels of clay which straiten one another*; but if we look up, forthwith the "spaces of charity" are widened. *If the vessels of the flesh are straitened, let the spaces of charity be widened.* It is right that we should feel horror at the sight of ourselves; but if we raise our eyes towards God our Creator and Redeemer, we shall certainly, by His grace, feel boundless confidence and joy, a happiness that takes away all bitterness, and ravishes the heart, which is too narrow to contain it and would fain pass beyond its own straitened limits.

If there arise within us antipathies to persons or things, let us repress them for the love of God, because they are a defect; they defraud us of our peace of heart, and diminish charity and the spiritual energies that are needful for making progress in the way of perfection. It is not easy for a man to realize the harm wrought by these aversions, and he often leaves them alone in consequence, or even nurses and fosters them with specious pretexts and under the pretence of good. I say under pretence of good, because these antipathies seem to proceed from our wish to see everybody and everything perfect according to our ideal, and this has the semblance of a good desire. Hence we fancy that we are moved by a noble impulse, and pay no heed to the baneful germ hidden in our feelings. We fail to perceive that such sentiments are opposed to wisdom, which warns us not to expect perfection on earth; opposed to humility inasmuch as they imply reliance on the strength of man, and above all opposed to charity, which "is patient, is kind, suffereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It behoves us then to resist and uproot these antipathies, which we have perhaps hitherto tolerated, whilst we must cultivate

instead the sublime sympathies of charity, that charity which comes from above, from Jesus Christ Himself. Our Lord Himself deigned to share our sufferings for more than thirty years, and He too had occasion to long for death, but death in accordance with his Father's will, and he too could say: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I *straitened* until it be accomplished!" How far more grievously was Christ tried than we are! Surely His afflictions as much exceeded ours as He was greater than we are, and yet He was restricted and confined to our measure, and obliged perforce to live among men like us, who grieved and oppressed Him on every side by their imperfections. Nevertheless His food was to do His Father's will, and therefore He bore with them, lived among them, suffered and died for them, or rather for us all, because we have all distressed and afflicted, and perchance crucified Him. Hence it is just, right and dutiful that we in our turn should bear our troubles with resignation and peace, and find consolation in the thought of resembling Him in some degree, and of compensating Him in some way by our patience. Out of love for us, He is pleased to see us endure our afflictions with patience, for generous endurance purifies and perfects our souls, since patience alone "hath a perfect work" and brings to us if we understand it aright, the ineffable happiness of following in His footsteps.

"We shall be like to Him in Heaven!" What a delightful hope! But if we have not hearts of stone, the hope, nay the certainty of being like to Him on earth will not be less dear to us. This certainty will strew our path with flowers; it will give a charm to the most distasteful occupations, especially to those performed for the love of God and our neighbour; new life will be infused into our life, and as in the Institute our only object is the exercise of this two-fold love, all our works will be embellished and illumined by the brilliant light of true life. Courage then, my dearest brother! to work, to work! By overcoming ourselves we shall subdue the

enemies who seek to obscure the serene sky where the Sun of Justice hath "exulted as a giant to run His course." Charity, patience, mercy, faith, but above all prayer, loving and persevering prayer, will bring us the light we need in order to understand and to practise this doctrine which is derived from Holy Scripture, and will strengthen us in our holy resolutions, the violation of which is equivalent to abandoning oneself to the darkness of the natural man and the devil. Their suggestions are the things that pervert man from virtue and justice; it is never reason or intelligence or the love of good that does so. I hope in the Lord that when I come, I shall see you bright and tranquil: this I hope and pray for. We will comfort each other. We both have troubles as well as consolations: we will share them together, or we will make the consolation get the better of the trouble, or rather God will do this for us. Pray also for me. God bless you!

A. R.

CLXXXVII.

TO SISTER BONAVENTURA ROSMINI AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

On the excellence of her vocation.

Strésa,

May 9th, 1850.

My dear daughter in Christ,

It gave me great pleasure to hear from you and I was much consoled by the account you give me of yourself. Have confidence in your Spouse, Jesus Christ, who will be ever with you to protect and lead you happily to walk in His footsteps. Keep the thought of Him ever present to your mind; call frequently upon Him for help with lively faith, and above all have perfect confidence in Him. What a privilege, what a consolation it is to love so great a God with all our heart and strength, to love Him alone to the exclusion of creatures, and yet in Him and for Him to love all creatures! What a delight and perfect joy it is to become the servant of His poor, of whom He has said: *Whatever you do unto one of these little ones, you have done it to Me*; He that takes cares of one of these children takes care of me. Meditate quietly and devoutly on these words and engrave them on your heart, for they will never fail to console you; and you will never cease to bless your Jesus, who has deigned to invite and bind you to Himself by this holy and glorious vocation. Do not lose the spiritual insight whereby you are able to despise what is great in the eyes of the world, and to love what is lowly. Christ's words cannot fail: to the humble and poor in spirit is promised the Kingdom of Heaven.

A. R.

CLXXXVIII.

TO GIACOMO LUGAN SCHOOLMASTER AT CAMERI.

On the occasion of the Feast of Pentecost.

Stresa,

May 17th, 1850.

My dear son in Christ,

I thank you for your good wishes and heartily desire the same for you and all my dear brothers who are labouring together in the Charity of Christ. Yes, may the Holy Ghost who descended upon the Apostles under the appearance of fire on the Feast of Pentecost, fill us with Himself, purify our reins and hearts with His heavenly fire, strengthen our will and enlighten our understanding, to the end that by His aid we may prevail against temptation and accomplish all the good works in which He deigns to employ us, and finally when our course is run and we have kept the faith, may we receive the crown of justice, laid up for us in God's treasure-house! Let us all pray together, as the Apostles prayed with Mary in the cenaculum, in order that the Spirit of prayer and Divine charity may pray in our hearts. Let us derive our courage from this Spirit, for if the conflict is stern it will soon be over, and beneath the banners of Jesus Christ victory is certain, the reward eternal and infinite. Adieu.

A. R.

CLXXXIX.

TO DON GIUSEPPE GAGLIARDI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

Some means by which a Superior may maintain religious observance in vigour.

Stresa,

June 29th, 1850.

My dear brother in Christ,

I am grieved to hear of the defects of some of our brothers. I will give you some rules that may be useful for the correction of these defects, or, when all other means have been tried in vain, for dismissing the delinquent. The rules are as follows :

1st. The Superior must show a *firm determination* to have all the rules observed. If the brothers are once convinced that the Superior means what he says, you may be sure they will not take certain liberties so easily.

2nd. This firmness must be *consistent*. Every word and act should be coherent, and the Superior must not be found contradicting himself through partiality or weakness.

3rd. The Superior should act with all gentleness, courtesy and affection, but the kindness should be apparent in his *manner* rather than in the *command itself*; it must not destroy firmness.

4th. He must speak plainly without fear or unnecessary reserve. It is no good saying things by halves or vaguely, and the old proverb holds good here: short accounts make long friends.

5th. At the same time, the Superior while showing a firm determination to have the rules observed should

exercise *discretion* and grant dispensations from this or that rule in particular cases, for considerations of health or other good reasons.

6th. The Superior must not only speak freely and without human respect, but also *calmly* and temperately, declaring that he desires only what is for the common good.

7th. He must not be sparing of reproofs and penances, but he must previously ascertain the facts and circumstances of the case. He should listen quietly to excuses and explanations; and if he finds he has made a mistake, he should give way at once, proving thereby that he was moved simply by zeal and love of justice. He must distinguish between faults that lead to laxity and evil consequences, and other faults which are accidental and not malicious: to faults of the first description he must show no mercy. The severity of the reproof and the penance should vary according to the nature of the case. When there is no improvement the Superior should plainly warn the brother that he intends to write to the Provincial and finally to the General. They will undoubtedly support you at all costs, even though it be necessary to send the brother away from the Institute.

8th. Whilst the Superior in giving correction must keep calm and express his wishes clearly without superfluous words which might betray irritation or excitement, at all other times he should be amiable, homely and humble in treating with the brothers, and often show them some little kindness and attention, especially in the case of those who have been reprov'd and have overcome themselves or promised amendment. These kindnesses must of course not be of such a nature as to infringe the rules in any way, for they would thus defeat their own object.

9th. Finally, the superior should assist and support the brothers in the fulfilment of their duties.

So let us take courage, and remember that if we are but men God is near us, and He always succours with His almighty power those who trust in Him.

A. R.

CXC.

TO DON LUIGI SETTI AT INTRA.

Advice to a young Superior.

Stresa,

August 3rd, 1850.

My dear brother in Christ,

What you say is quite true. A young Superior has indeed great difficulties to contend with, and it is only by the powerful assistance of God obtained by prayer, and by constant watchfulness over himself and over all his words and actions that he will succeed in so responsible an office. At the same time this trial will prove of great service for the amendment of his faults and the formation of his character, provided he enters on his task in the spirit of God and with great earnestness.

The two pivots of his government must be *discipline* and *kindness*. Discipline:—He must not allow himself through weakness or fickleness to be diverted from his purpose of maintaining and enforcing perfect observance in all matters of importance, though in little things he may sometimes use his discretion. Kindness:—Since he is too young to exert much authority or rigour, and yet it is his duty to secure religious discipline, he must have recourse to kindness, persuasion, reasonableness, affability of manner, combined, however, with firm and immoveable resolve: with these arms he can gain a glorious triumph. There remains, if need be, yet another resource, that is, he may apply to the higher Superiors, giving them a clear and impartial account of the difficulties in which he needs their intervention. I write

this for your encouragement, and because advice of this kind will always be useful.

I affectionately embrace you and all my dear companions at Intra, and I implore our Lord to grant you all grace and light to know the beauty of your work of charity, and to love a duty so pleasing to God.

A. R.

CXCI.

TO SISTER BONAVENTURA ROSMINI AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

He urges her to overcome all self-love by the love of God.

Stresa,

September 20th, 1850.

My dear daughter in Christ,

From what you tell me about yourself I perceive that your adorable Lord and dear Spouse Jesus has been very generous to you during this Retreat, especially by giving you light to know yourself and discover the hidden germ of vanity, which diminished, if it did not destroy, the merit of your good actions. Now that we have discovered where the flaw lies we must apply the remedy. You know how, when some old cupboard is worm-eaten, you hear an ominous *tick! tick!* Then if you make some noise or shake the cupboard, the tiny worm will desist from its labour. Now vanity may be compared to this insect; it would almost require a miracle to get rid of it altogether, but by dint of reducing it to silence and never leaving it in peace, it may in the end die a natural death. What a happiness that would be! Thenceforth only the love of God would reign in the soul, and reign freely in every part and faculty of the soul, in all she does or suffers. Happy will you be, my dear Bonaventura of Jesus, if you

reach this point! Indeed you *are* happy because you must surely attain it, since your Spouse is ever near you, ready to lend His aid, provided you trust in Him, faithfully and entirely in Him alone.

Whilst you have had the grace to discover one great defect, you have also become aware of your ignorance on another point, your ignorance concerning that good which is worthy of all love. You are quite right. Do you know what it is to know God as He is in Himself, as you desire? St. Augustine says of himself that he sometimes experienced such transports of love as would have been incompatible with life, had they increased in vehemence. Do you understand what this means? If you were able to comprehend that sovereign good towards which your heart aspires, that good to which you are wholly consecrated, you would no longer be in this world, you would be, unawares, in Paradise. It is just and reasonable that you should deplore your ignorance, which may be said to be infinite, and cease to cherish any self-complacency, for however much you may know of other things, you are still very ignorant concerning Him who is your sovereign Good. It is right also that you should continually complain to your Spouse, who is Eternal Wisdom, because He does not suffer you to know Him better, nay a great deal better. These affectionate complaints are very pleasing to Him, and if you continue to plead, He will not deny you but will vouchsafe to you a more intimate communication with Himself. Besides, what are these laments, what is their purport unless to raise you out of the distress and poverty of things visible and corruptible? They are in fine those desires of death which were familiar to all the Saints, beginning with St. Paul who said: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." They knew well what it was they wished for. But I should like you to desire to merit rather than to rejoice, because Christ in praying to the Father for His disciples, said that He asked not that they should be taken out of the world, but only that they should be

preserved from evil. So I would have you not so much desire to enjoy Christ as to serve Him in His little ones and to say with the Apostle: "I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren." Indeed, the harder you work for those for whom our Lord died, the better will you know Him, since there is no surer way of knowing Him than that of fulfilling His law of charity. "God is love, and he that abideth in love, abideth in God and God in Him." May the Lord continue to bless you all, and do you all pray for your affectionate Father,

A. R.

CXCII.

TO THE REVEREND MOTHER M. GIOVANNA
ANTONIETTI AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He recommends great confidence in God.

Stresa,

September 21st, 1850.

You may admit to the Novitiate the two postulants from Biella, about whom Sister Margarita wrote to me. Only remember what I have said before about examining the postulants thoroughly and being strict in admitting them to the Noviceship.

Once more I repeat that we must encourage ourselves to carry the cross of Christ. Our courage will increase if we have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and an intimate knowledge of His goodness. His loving-kindness is such that if we think of it we can never more lose heart, or turn cowards, or allow ourselves to be perturbed or dejected on account of our own faults or those of others. In the goodness of God there is a remedy for all ills, and when we are unable to find any, there precisely is the most powerful

of all; namely the knowledge that these very evils which we cannot or do not know how to avoid, are permitted by Him (without whose permission nothing can happen), for some good end, viz., to bring about greater good.

Therefore let not God's servants give way to discouragement or fear. Under such a Master it ill becomes us to lose courage or to be sad. It is true that we oftentimes fail in loyalty to Him, but it is also true that He condones all our faithlessness, for He has long since paid our debt with usury to His Eternal Father. You may be quite sure that He loves us none the less, nay even more, when we are imperfect and acknowledge it. He keeps count of all the labour and sufferings that are inseparable from your office, and even should you fail to obtain the desired fruit of your maternal solicitude, He weighs out your recompense as if you had obtained it. He rewards the labourer's toil whether the field be barren or fertile, provided that even the fig-tree which bears no fruit is tended carefully. Courage then! Peace and joy in the Lord!

A. R.

CXCIII.

TO THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE IN ENGLAND.

A answer to the questions: 1st, "How can the spirit of intelligence be exercised by a religious without injury to simple obedience"? 2nd, "How in works of Charity, may the spirit of contemplation be practically united with the active life?" 3rd, "How can perfect zeal and an ardent desire of bringing works of charity to perfection be united with a complete freedom from all self-esteem and a sincere desire of being humbled and despised?"

Stresa,

September 24th, 1850.

My dear daughters in Christ,

If I write to you but seldom, you must not attribute it to want of affection for you, because our Lord knows that I bear you in my heart, and offer you daily to Him at the holy altar. You must attribute it rather to my want of time and strength, and to my knowing that you are provided with a local Superior who is full of solicitude and zeal for everything that may be conducive to your continual growth in Jesus Christ. Now, however, that your Superior and my very dear brother in Christ is returning to you from Italy, I cannot do less than accompany him by means of this letter, first, that I may thank you for the gifts which your charity has sent me, a pledge to me of your filial devotion; and secondly, that I may briefly reply to the three important questions you have proposed to me. For, although I am well aware that on all such subjects you may listen to the voice of your immediate director, a voice full of wisdom and of the Spirit

of God, yet I also believe that to hear the same things from me, as you desire, will be, if not a source of instruction, at least a consolation and encouragement in well-doing, by reason of that affection in Christ and that obedience which you so willingly yield to me.

Your first question, then, is : "*How can the spirit of intelligence be exercised without injury to simple and blind obedience?*"

This question, and the two which follow, show your spiritual discernment, inasmuch as they bear witness to a longing for instruction in the more perfect things. For it belongs to perfection to know how to conjoin and harmonise in our daily life those virtues which seem at first incompatible, as if one excluded the other. As a matter of fact, one virtue can no more be opposed to another, than one truth can contradict another truth. But the judicious blending of those virtues that regulate faculties and affections having contrary tendencies, is an art which those who aspire to perfection ought especially to study. For in those who are truly perfect these virtues always go hand in hand. We see the same thing in music. The contralto voice, for instance, seems opposed to the baritone or the bass; yet a skilful composer, by knowing their accords, can so combine them as to produce a most agreeable harmony. To come, then, to our question, my answer is that simple and blind obedience may very well be conjoined and interwoven, so to speak, with the spirit of intelligence, and this in several ways.

First Way.—We must consider that the spirit of intelligence is more fully displayed, the higher and more universal is the reason which we take as the guide of our actions. For to act with a spirit of intelligence simply means to follow the dictates of right reason, without allowing ourselves to be moved or disturbed by any passion whatever. Now the highest and most universal of all reasons for acting is that of doing always and in all things the will of God, as I explained in a discourse printed some time ago, which I believe you have read.

But anyone who practises obedience with simplicity and a pure intention is certain of doing the will of God, who, speaking of all ecclesiastical superiors, has said: "he that heareth you, heareth Me." This reason is very simple, but it is at the same time most powerful and sublime, and contains in itself so great a good, that where it exists all inferior reasons become superfluous, just as one does not need a candle when the sun is shining. Hence what we call *blind* obedience is not devoid of light, but is in fact so luminous in itself that no other light is needed to supplement it.

Second Way.—The spirit of intelligence may also be exercised in the manner of executing a command. I will explain this by an example. Suppose there are two religious engaged alike in a certain work assigned to them by the Superior. One of them goes through the work without judgment, without attention, without spirit, without considering well what the order is and what the Superior's aim is in giving it. In short, he does the work, but with a bad grace, without esteem for it, and as it were in spite of himself. The other religious on the contrary, having received the order, seeks first of all to understand well what the Superior's purpose is. Then he studies the best way of giving effect to that purpose, devoting himself to the work in right good earnest, just as if it were his own concern; honestly wishing to succeed, using all due circumspection, showing by his whole manner that his occupation is not tedious but the reverse; finding his contentment in his duty, and all this from a deep conviction that he is pleasing God. This second religious, as you perceive, obeys not merely with simplicity, but also with the spirit of intelligence. He obeys, not as a machine made to move by some mechanical contrivance, but as a living and intelligent being. Indeed a Superior, when giving a command, cannot prescribe every detail relating to the manner of its execution. He gives the order and then leaves the subject to act for himself, and those religious who are possessed of more spirit of intelligence than others may be

readily known by the way in which they set about their work.

Third Way.—It frequently happens that the command itself is given in a more or less general form, leaving much to the judgment of him who receives it. In these cases, the subject must carefully note what is the sphere marked out for him by the order he has received; within that sphere, he is bound even by the rule of obedience to act on his own responsibility, not by caprice, but in the way which upon careful reflection he conscientiously believes to be best, that is to say, with the spirit of intelligence. If you, my dear daughters, consider the various members of a religious institute, you will see that all of them, if they have the true religious spirit, act through obedience. Even the General of the Order forms no exception to this principle, because he also is subject at least to the Pope. Nevertheless, obedience leaves a certain sphere for freedom of action, wider as a rule for superiors than for inferiors; and within the limits of this sphere, each one may, and indeed must exhibit his own spirit of intelligence. Thus in your house, beginning with the office of Central Superior and coming down in succession to the very last of the offices assigned in the community, you will find that all these offices being subordinate one to the other, and hence directed by obedience, may and must be exercised with a spirit of intelligence, because an injunction to this effect is implicitly laid on every sister holding an office, in so far as, within her peculiar sphere, she is left to her own discretion. You may also take an office of charity towards secular persons, for example that of school-mistress, or of visitor of the sick. This office being imposed by obedience, all the actions performed in discharging it have the merit of obedience; and yet what a spirit of intelligence is required to discharge it perfectly!

You will find this generally to be the case when you are bidden to do anything: a certain amount of liberty is left, wherein the spirit of intelligence may be displayed.

Suppose for instance that a sister is told to write a letter to some one and even has the subject of the letter traced out, is it not true that she may still have a good deal to think about in order to write sensibly and intelligently? Obedience, then, never determines *all* the actions to be done by the person who lives under it, for this would be impossible; but many such actions remain free, and in those the spirit of intelligence has ample room for its exercise.

Fourth Way.—The same spirit of intelligence may also be exercised in another way; that is by respectfully representing to Superiors what occurs to us as being necessary or useful to be mentioned in connection with what they happen to command. To do this, however, with a true spirit of intelligence, three conditions are required:—The first is, that our observations should not proceed from any feeling of self-love, but be inspired purely by zeal for good and for the glory of God. The second is that we do not make these observations with levity saying anything that comes into our heads, without having taken time to reflect well on the matter. The third is that we say what we have to say in the spirit of submissiveness, so that should the Superior, after hearing us, persist in his command, we take it not ill but obey with alacrity and contentment. If, however, there were question of a matter of great importance for the glory of God, and it really seemed to us that what the Superior enjoined would not be the right thing to do, then there would be nothing contrary to the simplicity of obedience in our having recourse to a higher Superior, provided however, that with him also the three said conditions were faithfully observed. Indeed Superiors are pleased to hear such frank observations from their subjects, when made in the spirit of charity and humility. But if, after all this, what we perform under obedience, happens to produce some untoward result (not however sinful), then he who obeys would not lose anything by it, nay he would be a gainer, inasmuch as that act of obedience contains one of those acts of Christian mortification which are

pre-eminently acceptable in the sight of God. By mortifying himself for the sake of holy obedience he has denied his own will, he has sacrificed his self-love, he has humbled his reason under a higher intelligence, even that of God Himself from whom the command proceeds; and all this is a great step forward on the road of sanctity. So much, then, on the first of your three questions.

The second is: "*How in performing works of charity, the spirit of contemplation may be practically united with the active life?*"

The union of holy contemplation with activity in works of charity is the aim of our Institute; and therefore, we must not rest satisfied until we have obtained from God the light which is necessary for effecting this union in us. I say that the power of conjoining contemplation with action must be obtained from God, because there is no master who can impart to us so sublime a science save Jesus Christ, who has exhibited a most perfect example of it in Himself. For this science consists in nothing else but an intimate union with Jesus Christ, a union effected in the best way possible. And He, by His mercy, prepared for us the means thereof in His Church even before we were born or could have desired such a thing. What are, then, the means for obtaining this intimate and continual union with Jesus Christ, which, instead of drawing us away from works of charity, urges us on and helps us in them?

The first of these means consists in a pure and simple intention of seeking Jesus Christ alone in all our thoughts, words and actions. This righteous intention is incompatible with, and would always be more or less injured by, any other affection influencing our actions. Hence it is not perfect until all self-love and all sensuality are completely renounced. I have said, however, that this intention which in all things seeks and loves Jesus Christ is injured by any affection which influences our actions, whether internal or external; because if an affection, or feeling were to arise within us wholly against

our will, so as in no way to influence our voluntary thoughts, words, or actions, then it would not diminish in the least the purity of our intention, but would rather make it all the brighter by bringing it out into vigorous exercise, according to the words spoken by Jesus Christ to St. Paul: "Power is made perfect in infirmity."

The second means, which is a help to the first, consists in performing our exercises of piety, and especially in approaching the Sacraments and assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, with sincerity and intelligence; since these exercises unite the devout soul in a special manner to Jesus Christ.

The third means consists in continually endeavouring to keep the love of Jesus alive in our hearts, always carrying His image depicted as it were before the eyes of the soul; listening to His words as we find them recorded in the Gospel; contemplating the actions He performed during the course of His mortal life and at His most precious death. We, as religious, ought to be perfectly familiar with all these things, applying our Blessed Lord's words and example to ourselves and to every thing we have to do; considering also how He would act in our case, and how He would wish us to act; consulting Him in doubtful cases with a sincere desire to know and to do solely that which is most perfect and most pleasing to Him; and when He interiorly speaks to us, listening to His voice with reverence and love.

The fourth means consists in beholding Jesus Christ Himself in our neighbours with whom we are brought into contact, sincerely wishing in all that we say or do, to promote their good in our Lord and likewise to gain edification for ourselves. If we have a lively zeal for the salvation of souls, we shall do our best to win them and bring them to Jesus Christ, and hence we shall scrupulously shun all useless and idle words, as also all superfluous conversations and all vain curiosity. But in order that our every word and action may really be directed to the improvement of others as well as our own, and

so bear fruits of eternal life, two things are necessary. First, Divine charity must always be our sole and universal guiding principle; second, we must ask Jesus Christ for that light of His prudence, which multiplies the fruits of charity. A sister who in all she says or does seeks the good of souls, her own or her neighbour's, will always be interiorly recollected even in the midst of many external occupations, because her intention will always be directed to charity, and they who always think of the charity of Jesus Christ and have nothing else in their hearts, are always recollected in Jesus Christ and in God, for as the Scripture says: "God is Charity."

But in order to acquire this habit, and to make the use of these four means effective in establishing in us a constant interior recollection even in the midst of external occupations, it is necessary to make strenuous exertions in the beginning, and to mortify ourselves much and resolutely in whatever has a tendency to distract the mind or is opposed to the said spirit of recollection and of the presence of God; and it is also necessary to pray fervently to our Lord for grace to assist us herein. In truth, nothing but intense and persevering prayer will enable us to arrive at that permanent state of rest in God, which, unless the will choose to abandon itself to evil, is never lost through external occupations. In connection with this matter, I may observe to you that the power of our soul by which we directly communicate with God and are united with Him, is different from all those powers by which we act externally. It follows, that when a soul has attained to a certain state of contemplation and union, it can, and indeed does act with the powers that regard external actions, without at the same time being at all disturbed in that quiet and that repose in God which are enjoyed by its supreme power. Hence, we read of certain holy persons, who, although they seemed to be wholly occupied with external things, were meanwhile conversing interiorly with their God and Creator; and this conversation far from being a hindrance to them in those duties,

was a help to their better performance; as on the other hand, their external works did not in the least interfere with that loving interior communication. So desirable a state is reached only by those faithful and constant souls who in the beginning make great efforts to mortify themselves, and pray with intense fervour and assiduity. To this state the Sisters of Providence ought to strive to attain during their novitiate, when they have every opportunity of making fast, if they will, this intimate and indissoluble bond with God, the Spouse of their souls—a bond which must endure for the remainder of their lives. And if any of them should not have attained it completely in the novitiate, they ought to do their best to acquire it with the least possible delay. But it is time for me to pass to the third and last question.

This is : *How can perfect zeal and an ardent desire of bringing the works of charity to perfection, be united with complete freedom from all self-esteem, and with a sincere desire of being humbled and despised ?*

This question is not less difficult than the other two, I do not mean difficult to answer in words, but difficult when we come to the practical application. But what *can* be difficult to Jesus Christ and to those who put their trust in Him and ask for His help?—In answer to this question I may remark :—

1st. That it is necessary here to presuppose the foundation of solid humility, which consists in not attributing to ourselves that which belongs solely to God, or to other persons rather than to ourselves; humility being in fact nothing but justice. In truth, it is just that man should account himself to be nothing of himself, for such he really is; and that he should account God to be all in all. It is also just that he should know that glory belongs, not to that which is nothing, but to Him who is all in all; and that therefore while disclaiming all desire of his own glory, he should eagerly wish to give all possible glory to God alone. It is just that a person who knows these things should feel pain whenever he hears himself praised, since

it is a gross usurpation for nothingness to desire praise; he should on the contrary, feel delighted at seeing that God is glorified. Again, man is even worse than nothing. He is a sinner, and this not only because of the sins he has actually committed, but also because of those he might have committed, and would continually commit, if God did not take pity on him. Consequently, it is also just that he should desire to be despised, and should rejoice when he finds himself ill-treated by others. These sentiments, which are the natural outcome of the acknowledgment of the truth, ought to be profoundly engraven upon the hearts of all true religious. But there is another truth to be borne in mind by religious persons. Although man, of himself, is nothing and, moreover, is liable to fall into every kind of sin; nevertheless Christ has, through His gratuitous mercy, redeemed him. He saves him, and clothes him with Himself, so that man carries about him the very robes of Jesus Christ—robes which are more or less rich and precious according to the greater or less abundance of the virtues, the merits and the graces with which he is adorned. Would it not, then, be great madness for a man who sees himself enriched with these ornaments, to be proud of them? Ought he not rather, considering that these treasures have been bestowed on him gratuitously and without any merit on his part, to be filled with confusion and refer the glory of them to God alone? But in the same way, that God bestowed on man these treasures of virtue and of grace by a preventing and gratuitous love, even so He makes him share in a portion of His own glory. Again, therefore, man must consider this glory with which he is invested, not as belonging to himself, but as belonging to Jesus Christ, who from pure mercy willed to extend and communicate it to those who believe in Him.

Having said this much by way of preface, I shall now proceed to mention the rules which will help us towards combining the desire of bringing our works of charity to perfection, not only with detachment from all self-esteem,

but also with a sincere desire of being despised, a thing most precious in the eyes of Faith.

First Rule. Not to give to others, generally speaking, any occasion of despising us, at least not by our own fault. When, however, notwithstanding we happen to be made objects of contempt, then we should receive this with gladness as something precious, and give thanks to God for it, having no fear as to any injury which may arise therefrom to our works of charity. For should any such injury occur, it would be willed by God for His own sublime ends, and we should therefore not feel aggrieved, but trust in Divine Providence, which will certainly know how to draw such good from that evil as will abundantly compensate for it.

Second Rule. Never to do anything for the ignoble motive of gaining applause; but if applause comes to us of itself, then to attribute it to Jesus Christ, to whom alone it is due, and with regard to ourselves to dread it as a danger, and to safeguard ourselves against it by making internal acts of humility and self-contempt, protesting that on no account will we receive it as a part of our reward. If after this, the applause turns out to be of advantage to the works of charity, we may even take delight in it, not indeed for our own sake, but purely for the sake of the advantage in question; keeping well on the watch lest any feeling of vanity or presumption should spring up within us, nay, being prepared, after receiving the applause, to be more humbled than we were before; and this from an intimate conviction that we have not, in consequence of that applause, become anything more than the miserable creatures we have always been.

Third Rule. When we perceive that the praise is exaggerated, to feel displeased at it, on account of the injury done thereby to truth and justice; or else to attribute it to the good heart of those who give it and who, not knowing us well, have too favourable an opinion of us.

Fourth Rule.—In order to discover whether we are truly detached from ourselves, it is well to examine ourselves

as to whether we are glad to hear others praised. In particular I would advise you, my dear daughters, to see, by a diligent self-examination if you are pleased when you find that praises are bestowed on your sisters. To yield even to the least feeling of displeasure or envy on such occasions would be a very grave defect indeed.

You should be generous with all, but especially with one another, considering the virtues of your sisters far more than their defects, and doing all you can to preserve to them (by just means of course) the esteem of others. So likewise you should all make it a point to decline any praises that may be given to you personally, each acting and speaking in such a manner that those praises may fall on her sisters. This will not be difficult to do if each of you is regularly accustomed to consider, on the one hand her own defects, and on the other her sisters' virtues; strictly forbidding herself all censorious judgments on their defects, because it does not belong to us to judge, but to God alone, as Jesus Christ has taught us saying: "Judge not that you may not be judged." In fact, to expose ourselves to the danger of judging others wrongfully is the same thing as to do them an injustice; consequently, in order that we may not run the risk of committing such injustice, we must abstain from all definite judgments against others.

Fifth Rule.—To avoid all self-praise and all allusion to things tending in that direction. And although, ordinarily speaking, it is not advisable, except for special good reasons, to speak directly in disparagement of ourselves; yet we ought as much as possible, to hide from others any virtues of which we may be possessed. I say *ordinarily speaking*, because sometimes it may be a proper thing even to speak reproachfully of oneself, provided one does so with sincerity and without affectation. In your case, occasions of this kind may offer themselves, especially in conversing with your sisters or others with whom you are on intimate terms.

Such, my dear daughters in Christ, are the things

which it has occurred to me to say in reply to your questions. I trust in God that, by meditating on them, and striving to conform your conduct to them, you will render yourselves ever more dear to His Divine Majesty, and thus become entitled to an immortal crown.

A. R.

CXCIV.

TO DON LORENZO GASTALDI AT TURIN.

He exhorts him to follow the call of God with promptitude and generosity.

Stresa,

October 5th, 1850.

You may be sure that if God moves you to come to this Institute in order to serve Him in our company, I shall receive you with great joy, and offer thanks to God because of the high esteem in which I hold you, and my confidence that God will render you a still more perfect instrument for His glory. Allow me to make one observation with the affectionate regard I have always felt for you:—if God calls you, come without delay, for generosity or rather justice requires us to answer our Lord's voice on the instant. How fruitful of good is a generous resolution! How abundantly God rewards the prompt and complete obedience of the soul that turns to Him at the first sound of His voice!

With regard to the stability of the Institute in Piedmont, who can foretell the future under existing circumstances? We must leave ourselves in the keeping of Divine Providence and seek nothing beyond. Until now we have been wonderfully shielded, almost led by the hand, and I think I see a token of special Providence in the good state

of this flourishing Novitiate, not so much in the number of novices, which is considerable, as in the fragrance of religious virtues. If I had to form an opinion from a human point of view, I should say that the Institute has a better chance of remaining in Piedmont than any other religious order. No matter what may befall us, the servants of God have the world for a home: they are in the hands of the Lord and fear nothing, since to them it has been said: "Fear not, little flock, I have overcome the world.—Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.—If they persecute you in one city flee to another." Awaiting further news from you I embrace you tenderly in the Lord.

A. R.

CXCV.

TO SISTER MARY GERTRUDE AT LOUGHBOROUGH.

Brief answer to some questions concerning the spiritual and religious life.

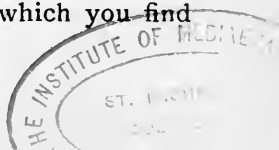
Stresa,

May 27th, 1850.

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ,

Father Pagani, your Provincial, has explained to me that in the letter which you wrote to me in English, you ask certain questions relating to the spiritual life. Although I think you must have read in your holy rules and heard from the lips of your Spiritual Director or of the Provincial himself, all that I can say on these points, yet in order not to leave your desire altogether ungratified I will send you a short reply to each question.

You ask in the first place: what is the characteristic spirit of the Institute of Providence? This spirit, I reply, is contained and described in the virtues which you find



set down in the second of your Common Rules; and if you only practise those virtues you will be a perfect Sister of Providence. Should you, however, wish me to express the same thing still more concisely, I would say that the characteristic spirit of the Institute of Providence is *Charity directed by Obedience and Prudence*. A simile will explain my meaning. Imagine that a Sister of Providence has to go to Paradise in a triumphal chariot. Well, then: the chariot is that sister's soul. The victor who drives the chariot in triumph is charity. The two generous steeds, that draw the chariot along a straight and sure road to the temple of glory, are obedience and prudence. By means of this simile you will easily understand what the entire life of a Sister of Providence ought to be. You will see that charity is what must triumph in her, but charity could not triumph unless it were directed by obedience and prudence—two virtues which mutually assist each other and go hand in hand, as you will remember that I explained in a former letter.

You inquire in the second place: "what ought to be the internal disposition of our Sisters with regard to the exercise of charity, and what their external work?" Their internal disposition ought to resemble gold that has been melted and refined in the crucible. Gold, when purified by fire, is a precious and most pure metal; moreover when reduced to a liquid state by the action of fire, it is intensely hot. Behold what the interior of a true sister of Providence ought to be, all purity and charity. She must not suffer her heart to be sullied by any earthly or disordered affection; she must be all aglow with the fire of the love of God and her neighbour. She must feel the most tender compassion for the ills of humanity, especially for those which affect souls; and she must be most desirous of giving her services in succouring others, and of doing all she can for their good, without any regard to her own personal feelings or to any merely human interests. When the Sister's interior is so disposed, the external work will follow of itself. It will be determined, first by obedience, then by

prudence. In all that is sanctioned by obedience and prudence she will exhibit an indefatigable zeal, and, what is also very important, a zeal full of contentment and cheerfulness.

Finally you ask : "What must the Sister of Providence do in order that her life may be in perfect accordance with the spirit of her vocation?" After what we have just said, nothing further is required than for her to *maintain inviolate the peace of Christ*. The Sister should keep continually on the watch lest any perturbation enter into her soul. Her mind should always be as serene as the beautiful southern sky when entirely free from the smallest cloud ; it should be as calm and tranquil as is the surface of a beautiful lake, when its pure waters are perfectly still, and the sun is placidly mirrored in it. You see, however, my dear daughter, how easy it is for some little gust of passion to interfere with this serenity, this tranquillity and calmness, and, should the wind increase in force, vapours will arise and cloud the heaven of her mind. This is why great and continual watchfulness is necessary. We should above all watch lest any feeling of anger should introduce itself into our soul ; and as soon as we begin to perceive the appearance of anything like this passion, we must lose no time in repressing it, so that meekness and humility may be perfect in us. "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart." If a soul resolutely closes the door against every feeling of anger, and consequently against all secret resentment be it never so slight, that soul will not swerve from rectitude and kindness in her judgments regarding the thoughts, words or actions of others ; she will walk in light, and enjoy the peace of the children of God.

I have now answered your questions, my dear daughter. Writing to you I intend to address myself to all my dear daughters in J  sus Christ, to whom I commend you with all my heart.

A. R.

CXCVI.

TO SISTER N. N. AT DOMODOSSOLA.

*He exhorts her to conquer temptation by confidence in
Christ and love of good.*

Stresa,

January 12th, 1851.

My dear daughter in Christ,

Our will must be always resolute and uncompromising in clinging to what is right. When evil thoughts occur to your mind, thoughts of vain-glory for instance, or pride, or disdain, and God gives you light to know they are bad, why do you not repel them at once and make the contrary acts? This is what you ought to do; then you would soon be free from these temptations or at any rate you would be so strengthened in good as to find little difficulty in conquering. Do you think it is like a good religious to wish to give up study because your Superior has reproved you for your pride? It is not study and knowledge that make us proud when we have an upright and pure intention; no, it is our own malice and the weakness of our will in withstanding it. Use your will, trust in Jesus Christ, and your enemies will fly from you, for the Christian who is incorporated in Jesus Christ, can command his will in virtue of the Head whose member he is.

Why then do you make such poor use of your will? Why do you not put yourself once for all on the side of right? You know very well that when superiors reprove or punish us or require anything of us, we should not be angry or sullen, but humble, docile and grateful for their charity. God gives us to understand that we ought to act thus, and that it would be wrong to act otherwise:

this knowledge is a light from God; follow it therefore, make up your mind once for all to do what is right, and repress your passions as soon as ever they rebel against your decision. Then you will find the peace and consolations of Jesus: you will have to fight, but you will conquer and press onward in the path of virtue that leads to Heaven. My dear daughter, I hope you will give me this consolation, and it will be a comfort to me to see you happy in the consolations of Jesus Christ. This is all I desire. So take in good part what I have said, and all that your other Superiors tell you. Be gentle, yielding and contented, no matter what may be your lot. You are not your own, but you belong to Jesus, and Jesus your Master makes known His will by means of your Superiors. Adieu !

A. R.

CXCVII.

TO SISTER MARIA FELICE STEDILE AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He congratulates her on her good resolutions and exhorts her to persevere in her vocation.

Stresa,

May 19th, 1851.

My dear daughter in Christ,

Our Lord who is always good and merciful, has restored health to your soul by means of this infirmity, so you must be very grateful to Him and never tire of thanking Him. I rejoice with you, for you have now humbled yourself and formed good resolutions to be henceforth firm and constant in your holy vocation, which after Baptism, is the greatest of God's gifts. My dear daughter, do not look back; be humble, obedient, peaceful, cheerful; accept all that God ordains for you by means of your Superiors, take what seems evil as well as what is good, for in the

end it is all for our good. Courage! May the enemy, self-love and the other passions never gain the mastery over the servant of God, the spouse of Christ! Let nothing dishearten you, let nothing disturb you: place all your trust at all times in God alone. Pray to Him without ceasing, and if at any time you commit some fault through human frailty, never be obstinate but acknowledge and confess it with all simplicity; ask for pardon remembering that Jesus died for your sins also, and then go on again in the path of virtue. If you really know Jesus Christ you can certainly never distrust Him, or lose your peace of soul: you will throw yourself upon His mercy and remain tranquil even though you know yourself to have been ungrateful and unfaithful. I trust you will do this. And when you have found shelter again in the heart of Jesus Christ, and when most you feel how good it is to be there, then pray especially for

Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CXCVIII.

TO DON ALESSIO BERTETTI AT RATCLIFFE COLLEGE.

Some means of overcoming a tendency to scruples.

Stresa,
June 6th, 1851.

My dear companion in the Divine service,

From your letter of the 15th of May, I perceive that what is wanting to you is a more resolute and determined will. For your intellect is not without light since you yourself pronounce all this hesitation and doubt to be so much sophistry, as indeed it is. I therefore bid you be more resolute with yourself, in the firm persuasion that these paltry subtleties of which you tell me, cannot help you to attain perfection. No, this is not the path of perfection you wish to tread and can tread with a holy liberty and simplicity of action. You should keep to the following maxims.

1st. Never refrain through fear of vain-glory from doing anything that is good and not contrary to the Rules, as for instance prayer, mortification, &c. If the temptation arises, say simply: "I will do this not out of vanity but for the glory of God," and take no more notice of it.

2nd. Whenever you are hesitating about doing something or not, break off your hesitation at once by saying: "This is not a sin, so I will do it to conquer my hesitation, for I know that in order to be perfect in virtue I must get rid of this defect: this must be my first step towards perfection." With these two rules you will acquire simplicity and liberty of action.

To think of reaching any other grade of perfection before you have done this, would be like putting the cart

before the horse. You must be firmly persuaded that perfection does not consist in minute reflections on all the details of our actions, but in a great desire to please God; and you may be quite sure that you will please Him far more by acting with great freedom and decision, than by attempting a minute and endless calculation of all contingencies. If you continue to give way to these doubts that arise in time of action, you will assuredly become entangled in scruples of which they are already a beginning, and scruples are to be feared, greatly to be feared. *I will have neither scruples nor melancholy in my house.* The spirit of God is wont to move us by a gentle instinct, acting upon our minds synthetically, not by way of analytical reasoning such as you describe. There is something human in the latter, aye and something worse; it perturbs the spirit, makes it dull and listless, and in the end unnerves a man and makes him useless for active labours in the service of God. Therefore *principiis obsta.*

Perfection then in your case consists in *acting without hesitation* and in the peace of Christ; and you will succeed if you are convinced that you must not try to reach any degree of perfection, real or imaginary, to the prejudice of this boldness and freedom of action. If it occurs to you that you might do something more perfect than what you have determined upon, say at once: "No, what I first decided upon is the most perfect for me: that will be most pleasing to God."

I do not fail constantly to implore God in His mercy to fill you and all our dear Brothers with the Divine Spirit, that in Him you may obtain your own sanctification and the conversion of the nation to which He has sent you. Adieu!

A. R.

CXCIX.

TO A BROTHER N. N. AT DOMODOSSOLA.

How temptations against vocation may be overcome.

Stresa,

November 1st, 1851.

My dear son in Christ,

You would have done well to acquaint me sooner with the temptations and assaults of the evil spirit. God has warned all those whom He calls to serve Him by a special vocation, in these words: "My son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." Here he bids us abide in *justice* and in the holy *fear* of humility, as also to *prepare ourselves*, particularly by a good will and prayer. At the same time He consoles us by the assurance of His assistance: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptations, for when he hath been tried, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to those that love Him." It is useless for a man to wish to devote himself to the special service of Christ, and expect to escape temptation and trial: he must needs fight against these temptations with the arms of faith, humility and prayer. If he do this he is *blessed*, as we are assured by God Himself in these words of St. James, because he thus becomes a well tried servant. On the other hand, the man who does not face the conflict endangers his soul, either by yielding to the temptation and falling into sin, or by abandoning the state of perfection on the *pretext* that he cannot resist temptation: a most cowardly pretext for desertion, of which God alone who called him is Judge and Avenger.

You, my dear son, have been called and admitted to the state of perfection. You have bound yourself to remain therein for life by the sacred bond of perpetual vows: this step is irrevocable *on your part*, and it is no longer lawful for you to escape from the obligation of your vows. Even dismissal from the Institute would not avail you where there is question of saving your soul. The Superiors cannot send any one away unless he were doing harm to the Brethren by his conduct, and in this case he is responsible for what has happened, and his dismissal does not improve his condition in the sight of God, no matter what it may appear in the sight of men.

I consider therefore not only that you are under a grave obligation of repelling the thought of forsaking the Institute, which you have entered by the grace and mercy of God, but also that you are bound to keep the sacred promise you have made to God Himself in the presence of the heavenly court, and to accomplish your happy oblation by living and dying in the Institute.

You should recognize in the thoughts that come into your mind the voice of the malignant serpent lying in wait for the ruin of your soul. Do not tolerate such thoughts, much less encourage them by weakness and inaction: drive them away at once and give your mind to what is more worthy of attention, to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, a spirit of purity and holiness. Subdue and chastise yourself, clinging to God by means of fervent prayer till the infernal temptation has passed away. The evil spirit deceives you under the appearance of good, making you believe that it would be easier to save your soul in another state of life. As though for a man who has faith and knows what God is, it is not like throwing himself into hell to quit the post which has been assigned to him! Then again, to be alarmed at the height of perfection proposed by Jesus Christ to His elect and by the Institute in accordance with His teaching, is another trick of the devil. It is want of faith to doubt the efficacy of the aids which Christ has given us together

with His law of perfection, or else to commit the folly of rejecting those aids. A man who acts thus seems to think that he can reach perfection by his own strength, and when he finds that impossible, he yields to despair. But the man who has faith and full confidence in God is brave and strong, even whilst conscious of his own weakness, and his courage increases day by day, as God reveals to him and makes him understand and feel His power and mercy.

Far from us be such baseness and perversity as to take counsel from him whom we well know to be the spirit of darkness and falsehood, consequently the fiercest enemy of evangelical perfection. The following are the weapons with which you may combat the enemy who would fain drive you out of the Paradise of holy Religion.

1st. Do not listen to the seductive words of the evil one; drive away *at once* all thoughts that tend to make you lose the love and esteem of your holy vocation, and the spirit of consecration to God's service in this Institute. Frequently renew the promises made to God of living and dying in holy Religion, with many acts of thanksgiving to Him who out of pure compassion has led us here.

2nd. Endeavour to enrich your mind with holy thoughts, your soul with loving desires, and your will with repeated resolutions to make progress in all virtues but especially in *humility, long-suffering and charity*.

3rd. Devote yourself to prayer as the first and most important of your occupations; try to enkindle your fervour in this holy exercise, and to acquire a great zeal for the glory of God and the desire to make Him known to men. Above all cultivate the practice of frequent and almost continual ejaculatory prayer.

4th. Love *lowly offices* as being well-pleasing to God, and repress every movement of pride, vain-glory, &c. Give yourself up to perfect *obedience*, rejoicing in it as something most pleasing to God, and an infallible means of obtaining precious graces; and do not fail to set great value on exact observance.

5th. Avoid *idle words*; if your conversation is edifying and salutary to your companions, the good you procure for them will return upon you. Do all in your power to further their spiritual welfare.

6th. Never lose heart, even if you commit some faults, or do not make all the progress you expect. As a rule we only improve by degrees, unless there is some extraordinary intervention on the part of God.

You see, my dear brother, what you have to do. I trust you will do it, and then you will be happy, and I too shall rejoice in your happiness.

A. R.

CC.

TO THE DEACON MARCO BECCARIA AT DOMO-DOSSOLA.

On the spirit of prayer and of love.

Stresa,

December 3rd, 1851.

My dear son in Christ,

I was expecting you to send me some account of your new position and new office, as we arranged at our last meeting. And now, your letter, dated the 1st of December has just reached me, with some particulars of yourself and the state of affairs. With regard to your Retreat, I had no reason to doubt that you made it with all diligence; nevertheless I was pleased to hear your account. Go on as you have begun, and endeavour especially to keep yourself in the presence of God and to cultivate the *spirit of prayer*, the prayer of the heart, which is what really gives life and heat to the soul. We must try more and more to convince ourselves of the infinite need we have of Divine grace to precede, accompany and follow our actions;

for the man who is firmly persuaded of this truth ceases not to cry out from his very heart that he may obtain this grace in every action, every instant of his life.

I think I can gather from what you say next that you teach your class with all diligence and earnestness, but in the spirit of resignation rather than love. And yet I should like you to do it for *love*. I assure you that it is in this the excellence of virtue resides. Try to attain this noble disposition of soul, in which love will become your ruling principle and make everything pleasant and delightful. You will certainly reach this happy frame of mind, with the help of Divine grace, if you fulfil two conditions. In the first place, you must conceive a great idea of the excellence of the work of charity towards our neighbour, to which we are called by Divine Goodness. This is unerring and living wisdom, "charity which surpasseth knowledge," as St. Paul says; whence it is that every act done for charity's sake is of infinite value. Secondly, in all you do for others the *object* ever present to your mind should be our Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ, who said: "Whatever you do to one of these little ones you do it to Me." What inspiring words to a man of faith! What an incentive to sacrifice! Let the love of Christ but increase in our hearts, and the interior man will be strengthened.

I was grieved by what you say in the concluding portion of your letter, that you are not treated with confidence by your Superiors. My dear Marco, I do not know for certain how the matter stands, but I should not like to see you labouring under some delusion or temptation. I know for certain that your Superior loves you, and it may be that he watches over you with special care. But what of this? Take it in good part, attribute this solicitude to his affection. Be on your guard lest in these suspicions there be lurking a little self-love, that self-love which we must detect and fight against as our untiring foe. My dear Marco, let us build on the true and solid foundation of humility; let us have no pity on ourselves. How many things that previously gave us offence will then seem

innocent or trifling, perchance even the subject of exultation! Examine yourself well on this point and try to become stronger in spirit. Write to me again on this subject, for I greatly desire, on account of the affection I bear you, to see perfect harmony and charity between you and your Superior: this is so easy and sweet if only self-love be brought low and humility and meekness reign in the soul.

A. R.

CCI.

TO DON LUIGI SETTI AT S. MICHELE.

On the necessity of keeping the soul at peace and free from inordinate attachments.

Stresa,

December 21st, 1851.

My dear brother in the Lord,

Here at last is the letter I have been expecting from my dear Setti! I have read it with real pleasure. What consoled me most was to see, that the trial you have undergone, has convinced you that the man who trusts in the Lord will never perish. We must commit ourselves to His care, and be ever fearful of ourselves but without losing courage; we can never be sure of ourselves, but on God we may always count. On the other hand, we must keep ourselves in great peace, my dear brother, and never allow our hearts to be disturbed, even when certain affections and desires seem to be good and directed to a good end. In such a tumult there is often some excitement of the imagination raised by the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light; hence a man easily becomes restless, pertinacious in his views and opinions, unruly, obstinate, perplexed, narrow-minded, and

full of similar defects which greatly impede the work of our perfection.

I am glad that you love the solitude in which you have found peace of soul, whilst I trust you are ready to leave it at the call of obedience. On this condition, your love of retirement is good, useful and pleasing to God. Otherwise it would be a delusion, a deceit of our crafty foe; you would be mistaking evil for good, your own will for God's will. If you loved the place and mode of life with an attachment prejudicial to obedience, even though your motive were apparently good and holy, that attachment would be detrimental to true perfection. Do you know what might come of it? This feeling of *attachment* which now seems to you so strong, might later on cease to be a *liking* even, and finally turn to *aversion*. It is not the first time that people have professed to desire a certain kind of life simply for the love of God and deemed it absolutely necessary for the salvation of their souls, and then afterwards have changed their minds and wanted something quite different, with equal obstinacy and on the same pretext of saving their souls.

Therefore let us build on a solid foundation, resting on that principle which cannot fail or deceive us, the principle of simple obedience. There is no need to occupy ourselves with thoughts of the future, or to wonder what we shall do in imaginary contingencies: no thoughts are so futile or so liable to excite our imagination. On the contrary, it is by simplicity of heart, by committing the care of ourselves to God without thought for the morrow, and by cheerfully fulfilling the duties of to-day, that we go forward "in the beauty of peace." So give yourself to prayer, attend to the Church and the house, give good example to your neighbour, acquire by diligent and well-directed study the knowledge you need for the work of preaching and hearing confessions; be zealous for the salvation of souls and eager to do good, be cheerful and affable with all, and have no thought for the future. Leave it to God.

Write to me from time to time if all goes well, as I trust and pray. All here salute you and affectionately embrace you and all your companions.

A. R.

CCII.

TO DON COSTANTINO COMOLLO AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He encourages him to overcome the difficulties of his office.

Stresa,

January 6th, 1852.

My dear brother in Christ,

Why are you troubled? Why do you let your mind be overclouded and robbed of peace? We should be deeply convinced that these troubles are the effects of the secret workings of the crafty enemy of souls. Let us accustom ourselves to consider the Superior as a Superior, and nothing else; then we shall love all his commands and counsels. If we were always prepared to meet contradiction, thoroughly convinced that it will help us to make spiritual progress, we should no longer want to criticize and censure other people. We must remember that the best criticism is self-criticism, and the second best is what is made in virtue of our office, as when a master finds fault with his pupils, but always in the spirit of charity. Every other censure must be put aside. I know it is hard to curb the imagination, which conjures up a hundred suppositions in order to depreciate others and favour self. Nevertheless, if we fight vigorously, with confidence in God and check these thoughts as soon as we perceive them, they will soon cease to be troublesome, and we shall acquire stability of mind. Have recourcé to God and beg Him to give you this grace: speak to your Superior also frequently and with confidence. You have done well to

write to me, but do not hesitate to give your confidence to your immediate Superior. Whenever you unbosom yourself to him, you will have the reward of this beautiful act of humility and sincerity, and you will feel the happier for it.

The Government regulations are troublesome certainly ; but in this world we have need of fortitude and patience at every turn. What sort of virtue would ours be if we were to lose courage for every trifle ? We shall never be anything else but children, unless we learn to face the conflict.

As for what you tell me about disliking the studies assigned to you by Providence, this is most unreasonable. If we choose, we can find marvellous delight in mathematical and physical science. Man is made for these studies, which are both pleasant and fruitful, and every one has some natural inclination for them if he will only cultivate and develop it. It is possible certainly to crush the taste implanted by the Creator, but the man who does so is reprehensible, especially if his duty requires him to study and teach these sciences. You should try to appreciate your studies, and from the marvellous laws we find in nature raise your mind to the Creator. A scientist who does this is better able to say : "All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord." Besides the grandeur, the interest, the unfailing novelty of natural sciences, in which we can always find delight, have we not also the most holy motive of *charity* to animate us in our studies ? Amongst us it is as much a work of charity to teach a class as to preach a sermon. So we must not allow the soul to be oppressed by gloomy thoughts, but acquire once for all the art of being happy and joyful in the service of our good God.

If you like to read some theological work by way of a change, I have no objection, provided that it does not make you lose your interest in the principal occupation. Be of good courage, my dear brother. Take some good walks to raise your spirits ; all this trouble may have come because you failed to remove the cause, and did not

take a proper amount of exercise. If you do as I bid you, I trust the little storm will pass away and be followed by perfect calm. With all my heart I trust and pray it may be so! Adieu!

A. R.

CCIII.

TO SISTER MARIA FELICE STEDILE AT BORGOMANERO

An answer to the question : "What is the difference between the way in which God is present in all things, and that in which He is present in the souls of the just?"

Stresa,

January 12th, 1852.

My dear daughter in Christ,

As a New Year's gift, I will endeavour to answer the question you have proposed to me, namely: "What is the difference between the way in which God is present in all things, and that in which He is present in the souls of the just?" You must ask our Lord for light to enable me to speak according to truth and to make myself understood.

First of all, then, we must consider that God is equally present in all things with His Essence, or, which is the same thing, with His whole self, because by His power He has created all things, and continually creates, that is, sustains them all so that they may not fall back into nothingness; and this power is His very Essence. For the same reason we might say, and even with greater propriety, that all things are in God's hands, or that they are in God.

At the same time, however, you must observe that not all things are conscious of this essential presence of God. Inanimate things and brute animals cannot know it, because they have no understanding. Hence God is not present to these things in such a way as to be known by

them. He gives them existence and life, and by this operation is present in them : they are therefore present to God, who knows them ; but God is not present to them, because they neither know nor enjoy His presence.

Let us now come to man, and in the first place let us consider him in his natural state, destitute of all supernatural light. Man by the natural light of reason alone can know, though with a very imperfect knowledge, that God exists ; and man can know also that God is the ruler and preserver of the world. God gives existence to man, as He does also to inanimate beings ; life, as He does to brute animals ; and moreover the light of reason, and, through it, some knowledge of Himself. Man, therefore, is not only present to God, but God begins also to be present to him, inasmuch as He begins to be known by him. And if a man keeps the precepts of the natural law, and lives up to the dictates of equity and justice, his understanding being more enlightened and his heart more righteously disposed, he will know God better than the man who, with a mind darkened by the passions and a depraved will, thinks only of himself and of things gross, earthly and vicious. Hence although the just and impious are equally present to God, He is more present to the just than to the impious, even if we consider the natural order alone, though as a matter of fact in the present condition of humanity there is no perfect justice to be found in the natural order.

Let us now pass on to consider man as favoured with supernatural light, and justified by sanctifying grace, which is the state of those who are incorporated with Jesus Christ and who communicate with Him through the holy Sacraments. The man who is invested with this kind of justice, infinitely more sublime than mere natural justice, not only knows God more perfectly, but also possesses and enjoys God. To him, God gives not merely existence as to inanimate beings, life as to brute animals, understanding and a certain knowledge of Himself, as to those men who remain in the natural order ; but He, moreover, gives Himself to him.

In order to understand, therefore, how God is present in the soul of all good Christians, it is necessary to understand the manner in which He gives Himself to them.

The difference between knowing by the light of natural reason that God exists, and the possession of Him by grace is immeasurable; it is not a difference of degree, but of kind. Blessed are they who thus know God by their own experience! We may, however, try to explain this difference in a certain way by similes. It is like the difference between two hungry men, one of whom knows that there is somewhere a store of delicious food but cannot get it; whereas the other not only knows of it but has it in his possession to make use of at will. Or again it is like the difference between a man who only knows of the existence of a treasure, and another who possesses and can spend it at pleasure. Or once more, it is like the difference between a mother who is continually thinking of a beloved daughter separated from her by death, or living thousands of miles away from her; and another mother who rejoices in having a darling child always under her eyes and is able to take her in her arms. You see that in each of these cases the difference is immense.

To the soul, therefore, that is justified, that is to say incorporated with Jesus Christ and faithful to Him, God gives not merely what He gives to all other men, but He moreover gives Himself. Hence not only is God present to that soul, but He is united with her in such a way that she feels His infinite greatness, feeds on Him, possesses Him, and embraces Him most closely. He, the supreme Good, fills the soul, justifies and purifies her daily more and more by His grace, embellishes her with all virtues, endows her with the most precious gifts of the Holy spirit, establishes His peace within her, envelops her with a certain interior glory, concealed indeed in this life, but destined to be revealed in the next, like a hidden fire suddenly bursting forth into the brilliant flame of eternal beatitude. In this way, with

these treasures and with this manifestation and communication of Himself, God dwells only in just and holy souls, not in any other creatures. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ promised when He said: "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." And a little further on: "If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him." And in another place: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me." Note well the words: "the living Father hath sent Me;" for you will never find it said in Holy Scripture that a Divine Person is sent to perform works of nature, but only works of grace. And why? Because through the operations of the grace which is in the souls of the just, God communicates Himself, manifests Himself, so that we may say that the just live a supernatural or divine life, that is the life of Christ. As Jesus Christ lives of His Father's life, who is therefore called the *living* Father, because He not only has life in Himself but also communicates His life to Christ, so Christ in His turn communicates His life to us. Hence the saying of St. Paul: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him."

You see then, my dear daughter, what a great and precious thing it is to keep the commandments of God and to love Him; and in particular, how fortunate are those who are called and consecrated to His special service in the religious life. Do you then and all your dear sisters in Christ prize dearly your holy vocation; indeed let us all do so, and without ever losing courage, strive our utmost to conform our lives thereto. Adieu!

Your affectionate father in Christ,

A. R.

CCIV.

TO DON MARCO BECCARIA AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He exhorts him to serve God and his neighbour with great fervour.

Stresa,

February 11th, 1852.

My dear brother in Christ,

I thank God for your good news. O that we could learn to thank Him and serve Him and love Him for ever! "The Lord their God shall save them in that day, as the flock of His people, for holy stones shall be lifted up over His land. For what is His good thing and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and the wine that bringeth forth virgins?" What can we desire except that these *holy stones* be raised upon the ground of our Institute, which should be the living Temple of God? In order to obtain this let us be more and more self-restrained and humble, mindful that we are *carrying earthen vessels*, and that God alone can enkindle the flame which shall one day burst forth from the clay and blaze into brilliant light. Let us never forget for a moment the injunction to "watch and pray," given us by Christ as the great means of perseverance. Let us avoid whatever might weaken our will, and let us strengthen by daily and resolute acts the sacred purpose of our vocation. This is the *eternal life* spoken of in the Psalms: the way of peace and of glory. Let our free-will be wholly given to God, let us cling to Him with all our strength.

The good you do to souls by preaching the Divine Word will redound to your own advantage. I should like to see you devoted heart and soul to this apostolic

ministry. You will find no better way of succeeding than by drawing the riches you are to scatter from the treasury of Holy Scripture.

The study of Moral Theology is tedious certainly for want of good method: but it becomes attractive and desirable when we see how useful and necessary it is if we wish to do good to our neighbour.

Salute all the dear Community and pray earnestly for me in your Holy Sacrifices.

A. R.

CCV.

TO SISTER MARY GERTRUDE IN ENGLAND.

God is the Physician, Father and Spouse of souls.

Stresa,

March 23rd, 1852.

My dear daughter in Christ,

I was much consoled by the account you give me of yourself in your letter of February 11th. Have great confidence in God, for He is our Physician, our Father and our Spouse. As Physician He heals us of our infirmities, and we must take the salutary medicine He gives us even if it is a little bitter sometimes. As a Father He teaches His children, nourishes them with His Divine Word and clothes them in the precious raiment of virtue. As Spouse He unites Himself intimately to them, consoles them and makes them happy by communicating Himself wholly to them. What then shall we fear if we desire to be all His and try not to be ungrateful to Him? What may we not hope for from Him? We may, we must trust Him who can and will give us everything, if only we love Him.

May Jesus Christ enrich you with the knowledge of Himself, for all our happiness consists in knowing Him!

A. R.

CCVI.

TO THE SCHOLASTICS OF THE INSTITUTE OF
CHARITY AT DOMODOSSOLA.

He inculcates spontaneous and personal activity in corresponding with the grace of vocation.

Stresa,

April 5th, 1852.

My dear sons in Christ,

Welcome as your letters are, I am not always able to answer them immediately, but I consider it my duty to write at least occasionally, and I hope to tell you something useful. In reply to your last letters, I congratulate you, my dear brothers, because I perceive you understand the inestimable value of your holy vocation and are fighting with the arms of faith against the malignant enemy of your souls, who is always devising some fresh plan for their destruction. Have no fear of him, clothed as you are with the armour of Christ, whereby you are not only proof against his attacks but able to crush and vanquish him entirely. It is therefore right and reasonable for the soldier of Christ to be of good courage, no matter what may betide him. Even though we should sometimes be so unfortunate as to yield to some extent and be wounded, nevertheless we can renew the conflict and animate ourselves to fresh valour; and if we draw nearer to our Captain and use the weapons He is always ready to give us, we shall yet gain a complete triumph. To this end, there are two things which I would specially impress upon you, namely, to love and cling to the Institute of Charity with daily increasing earnestness, as the safeguard of your salvation; and in the second place to fight for yourselves, and not look to others for

support in this spiritual conflict, wherein you must vanquish your foes and win the glorious trophies of virtue.

I was saying that you must all try to increase each day in esteem and love for your Institute. In other words, you must open your hearts to all that is contained in the Institute of Charity. You must learn to appreciate the sublime *end* it has in view; then you must love all its Rules and enter into their spirit, for these Rules are the chief means whereby that end is realized; and this applies equally to the various regulations and customs which complete the system of the Rules. You must keep in the closest union with your Superiors by affection and esteem, for they are the living instruments through whom the Institute operates, its Rules are brought into force, and its end attained. The unmistakeable sign of this cordial esteem for all Superiors is found in the noble virtue of obedience. In this virtue especially you must strive with holy rivalry to surpass one another, to your mutual edification, so that no one may be able to say who amongst you is the most respectful, affectionate and obedient. And as the sacred bond of cordial obedience closely unites you to all the Superiors (without distinction of grade and person), so also *brotherly love* should unite you among yourselves, that your daily intercourse may be mutually useful and pleasant. Then each one will prevent his brother in deference and kindness and affability, without envy or coldness, and the good of one will become the good of all.

You will require a great heart, for you must love many, many other things in the Institute; and, in the first place, you should be attached to the work assigned to you, regarding it as the field where you must dig to find the hidden treasure.

The man who hopes to find a treasure by digging the ground, does not work unwillingly or listlessly or gloomily. There is no occupation properly speaking that is not noble, either in itself or by reason of the end in view, and in every occupation we may, if we will, find much delight and satisfaction, provided only that we give our whole

mind to it. In your present studies you will find so much to delight and strengthen and ennoble the mind, that there seems to be greater danger of excessive attachment than of weariness and dislike. What I have said about your principal occupation, namely, that you ought to love and cherish it, applies also to secondary employments, and to all the duties assigned to you in or out of the house either now or at some future time. No doubt these duties have their own difficulties, and often involve toil and inevitable suffering. But here precisely is an opportunity of showing the power of love and that nobility of soul we should be so anxious to possess. We should highly appreciate this occasion granted to us by Providence of triumphing over difficulties, of exerting all our strength for God's glory at some cost to ourselves, of bearing those crosses and troubles which on the one hand are due to our sins and on the other help to atone for them, and withal prepare for us a more glorious crown; for we know from the words of Eternal Truth that perfection of virtue is found in patience. He who truly loves virtue is glad to suffer for its sake. Love finds delight even in the hardships of the struggle. It follows from this, that there is nothing which you cannot and should not love in the Institute. To correspond to your vocation, to please God who gave it, to fulfil the sacred promise of your vows, one thing only is asked of you as necessary, and that is a great *love*, which will render everything attractive and delightful. What I have said will suffice on this point.

The second thing I wish to impress upon you is, that in the practice of virtue you should act for yourselves, independently of the inducements of Superiors or of certain external aids and supports. For there is a great difference between going in leading-strings like children, and walking alone like grown-up people. The spiritual man must cease to be a child as soon as possible, and become a *man* in virtue of an upright and resolute will. What do I mean by this? I mean that we must look upon the practice of virtue as our own business. When

a man is working for his own personal advantage, he exerts his utmost strength, and grudges neither care nor toil; hence it is commonly said that a man works hard when he works for himself. A servant labouring for a master has not the same interest in the work, nor does he use the same diligence; he does not put forth half the energy he would employ if working for himself, and he soon feels heat and cold and thinks the day will never end. My dear brothers, the Saints did not act in this slavish spirit, least of all those who achieved most for God's glory and the good of their neighbour. They were indefatigable, patient, brave, constant in purpose and proof against their sufferings, which indeed they aggravated by penance. How was this? What they did, they made their own; they loved to do good, and to do it without limit or measure. The Saints never thought they had done enough, but were always considering how they might do more and obtain more; they left no means untried and consequently they put forth their whole strength almost unconsciously. What a difference between such men and those Religious who need so many props; and find it so fatiguing to take a few steps forward! Everything seems too much for them and religious discipline intolerable. Why is this? Because instead of acting of their own accord, as they would if it were a question of some great gain for themselves, they persuade themselves that they are bestowing some benefit on Superiors or on the Institute, for which the latter are expected to be duly grateful. Indeed, they seem almost to believe they are conferring a favour on God Himself! Now, with such base and servile sentiments a man cannot find in himself strength to do more, because the best part of his energy lies latent and, as it were, dead and buried in the depths of the soul. When we do not make energetic use of the will, we are not conscious of our own strength, and declare we have none because we feel none. We feel weak because we do not exert our will, and we do not exert our will because we have no great love of spiritual good;

and this because we do not understand it or know it to be our own good, our own great and infinite good.

All this holds good also in worldly matters. Tell me, why does a man become a hero, why does he perform those feats that astound the world? It will be said, because he is very ambitious. True, but is not this ambition an ardent longing for the empty glory of the world? Why does a merchant pass his nights over his account-books and consider ways and means all day, why does he wear himself out and risk his health and life in long journeys, except because he thinks money the most desirable thing in the world? Otherwise he would sleep calmly at night and pass his days in idleness; he would not have energy for so many cares, such feverish activity and painful efforts. But because he has set his heart on that illusive good and is determined to have it, everything seems possible and he cares not how much he suffers. The same may be said of all other passions: any great passion will stimulate man to energy and endurance.

This same law which regulates human nature with respect to temporal things, applies also to what is true and substantial good, namely spiritual perfection, which comprises the practice of all virtues, all works of charity, all enterprises undertaken for God's glory. I wish you all to understand this, my dear brothers. Although you are under the direction of Superiors who represent Christ among you, accustom yourselves notwithstanding to do all the work assigned to you, as though it were your own free choice, seize upon it eagerly as a great treasure. You will then find yourselves becoming stronger. What seemed impossible will become feasible; what you thought hard will be easy; what was repugnant will become pleasant and attractive. Jesus Christ taught us the art of increasing our own strength when He urged us to take the kingdom of Heaven by violence; He taught us how to be violent when He taught us how to love.

May Jesus Christ bless and console you!

A. R.

CCVII.

TO A BROTHER N. N.

*He shows that it would be an act of presumption to desire
Holy Orders against the Will of God*

Stresa,

May 14th, 1852.

Your letter has given me no little displeasure. I had hoped that as you grew older you would acquire a manly tone of mind and become solidly grounded in virtue, but I find on the contrary that you are still fickle and volatile, led astray by your imagination, and swayed by childish vanity. Why do we leave the world except to overcome all vain-glory and pride, and to seek God in the exercise of charity? But you fancy you are despised and neglected, and you cannot remain tranquil and contented, because of a foolish ambition to become a priest! Is not this the height of folly? You want to be a priest in spite of God and your Superiors, you want to enter the sheepfold like a thief through the window, and so to lose your soul. And what is your motive? Is it to serve God? Nothing of the kind: it is to gratify your pride, so that you may not be less than your companions, because you cannot bear to hold an inferior position: which are the usual reasons suggested by the devil. Surely if what you desired were to serve and please God, you would drive away these thoughts which distract you from His service, and you would be happy in the thought that a vast field is open to you, wherein you may labour for His love and deserve to enjoy Him for all eternity. It is not the salvation of your soul you are thinking of, but only of raising yourself and making a show in this world.

How grievously you are deceived ! Open your eyes once for all to the truth, and put aside all these frivolous considerations. I will show you how you can be superior to all, how you may gain true eminence, true dignity. Surpass every one in virtue ; become the most obedient and docile of all, the most fervent in the love of God and of prayer, the most unselfish, the most detached from the world and its vanities. This, and no other is the dignity to which God has destined you. You remember how some time ago, being conscious of your weakness, you desired to renounce the sacerdotal dignity by vow ; and that I would not allow it, telling you that it was already included in the vow of obedience. How is it you have forgotten all this so soon ? Rise from the state to which you have fallen, shake off this feeling of melancholy, and understand that the condition of a lay-brother is not a degraded or oppressed condition (except in the eyes of ambitious men). On the contrary it is most honourable for a Christian, and a layman can become greater than a priest if he is more virtuous. So take courage, and fight against the enemies who are tormenting you even to the point of driving you to violate the sacred promise you have made to God by the holy vows. All depends on your will. Offer yourself anew to God and without reserve : thus only will you gain lasting peace. Adieu ?

A. R.

CCVIII.

TO THE SAME.

He accepts his repentance and shows how he must act for the future.

Stresa,

June 1st, 1852.

My dear son in Christ,

Certainly you may still apply a remedy to your past and present evils; and I have not ceased to hope for it; but in that case you must attend to the following points.

1st. You must effect a complete change in your manner of thinking, making it more *spiritual* and more conformable to the maxims of the Gospel and of the Saints, who placed their delight in humiliations; never presuming on yourself, or deeming yourself worthy of honours, much less going in quest of them, which would be directly contrary to your religious vows.

2nd. Do not imagine you are dishonoured when you do not receive those distinctions which are coveted by ambition and other natural passions.

3rd. Try to acquire a higher degree of *union with God* and a great love of prayer. It is by prayer alone we can obtain the spiritual light we need in order to work out in earnest our salvation and sanctification.

4th. Try hard to become perfect in obedience. When the wishes of Superiors clash with your own do not be vexed or take it amiss, which is a sign you are attached to your own will, but give way and accede heartily to their wishes. Do not say again that you find them tiresome, for it is our own passions that are troublesome; when we are too much attached to our own will and our own ideas

we want to have *absolutely* those things which we should only desire *conditionally*, after the example of Jesus Christ, who said: "not My will but Thine be done." You will be able to love your Superiors, if you leave to them the duty of commanding and fulfil your own duty of faithful and cheerful obedience. Then the protection of God will not fail you, because He always protects the obedient, and rewards them abundantly with what is really for their good.

5th. Moreover, you must make up your mind to *overcome yourself* and to get rid of all bitterness, keeping your heart at peace and your mind tranquil. You will obtain this if you think only of pleasing God, and acquire a *holy indifference* with regard to all other things, so as to be equally contented whether they are given to you or not. We shall act thus if we truly love God; it is a sure sign by which we may know whether we love Him sincerely and in very deed.

6th. In school-matters also it is necessary to act in unison with Superiors, and to submit without complaint and without regret when their views do not coincide with yours. In fine, you should imitate the Saints, and instead of following the maxims of the world or devising subtle excuses, yield gladly and thank God for the opportunity given you of so doing. If you do not appreciate the beauty of Christ's doctrine, pray for light and it will be given you. "If any of you want wisdom let him ask it of God," says St. James. Is it possible for a truly obedient man to remain at variance with his Superior? Such a case is impossible. A man who is really obedient enjoys unalterable peace; hence he is closely united in charity with his Superior and lives in perfect harmony with him by simply yielding always and in all things.

Tell me whether you wish sincerely to adopt these principles and allow yourself to be guided by your Superiors, because otherwise I could not rely on you. May our Lord bless you!

A. R.

CCIX.

TO THE SCHOLASTICS OF THE INSTITUTE AT
MONTE CALVARIO.

He gives them some spiritual advice.

Stresa,

October 16th, 1852.

I have read the account you give me of your spiritual conflicts and your confidence in God, under whose standard you are fighting. Happy they who are engaged in this warfare! They are sure to conquer in the end if they remain faithful, for their Captain has never lost a battle. It only remains for you to be firm in your allegiance to this Captain, looking for the glorious end. Let there be no sign of inconstancy, impatience or cowardice, rather let one and all learn in time of tribulation to endure patiently and wait for the coming of our Lord. Although you are well equipped with spiritual weapons, which are furnished by the Rules of your holy Institute and the direction of Superiors, still I may send you a brief summary of the excellent maxims of St. Ignatius, as contained in some verses by Padre Andrea Frusio. It would be well for you to commit them to memory.

1. Nulli nec minimo quavis ratione repugnes,
Cedere te potius quam superare juvet.
2. Obsequium studeas praestare per omnia caecum,
Judiciumque libens subiice cuique tuum.
3. Nec vitia inspicias aliena et visa recondas,
Sed propria incuses atque patere velis.
4. Quidquid agas, dicas, mediteris, prospice primum
Proximo an expediat, complacatque Deo.

5. Sit tuo spiritui libertas semper, et illam
Nec persona potens, causa nec ulla gravet.
6. Nec facili iungas tibi consuetudine cunctos,
Spiritus et ratio quemlibet ante probent.
7. Exerce assidue pia mente et corpore facta,
Sis populo ut clemens, sic sapis ipse Deo.*

Yours affectionately in Christ,

A. R.

* TRANSLATION.

- 1 All contradiction scorn, no truth belied,
Yielding thou conquer'st, self and human pride.
- 2 At duty's call, submit, resign thy will, nor deem it hard to others thus to
bend,
Thy judgment too renounce, suspend, deny, the will of God be done, be
this thy only end.
- 3 Seek not to find another's guilt, but look at home.
Hide thou thy brother's shame, thine own make known.
- 4 Nor think, nor speak nor act thou lightly, ponder well each word and deed
That all may tend to God's great glory, and thy neighbour's need,
- 5 Be thou no slave to favour, God has made thee free,
Do all for God, and none can injure thee,
- 6 Let no light friendship make thee slave, but choose a well-tried friend,
One who will lead in virtue's way and love thee to the end.
- 7 Weigh well thy actions, and thy love, nor carelessly bestow
Thy powers on mean and useless deeds, such aim for man too low
Be kind to all, let all thy goodness share,
To please God, be thy first and greatest care.

CCX.

TO THE SUPERIORS AND MASTERS IN THE COLLEGE
OF DOMODOSSOLA.

He recommends the strictest union.

Stresa,

December 24th, 1852.

My beloved companions in the Lord. May Jesus be born and increase in your hearts!

To-morrow we shall celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ. On the approach of an anniversary so joyful and beneficent for mankind, a thousand loving emotions must spring up in our hearts, whilst the Angels' words are ringing in our ears: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." These precious words, which I love to repeat, may serve as the expression of my cordial greetings. And with good reason do I choose these words to interpret my desires and prayers in your behalf. I have no greater desire than this, that you should all seek with one accord the greater glory of God, like the Angels in the highest heavens, that is in your souls rendered pure and spiritual, where canticles of praise, thanksgiving and oblation should never cease; and in the second place that you should preserve among you perfect peace, the peace of Jesus Christ, which is the fruit of Charity, in Scripture phrase, the beauty of peace: *in pulchritudine pacis*. I write this to you, because I have learnt to my great sorrow that there sometimes arise among you dislikes, rivalries, jealousies, animosity, murmurs, complaints, irritation, vexation and other similar fruits of the poisonous germs of self-love, the deadly foe of the charity and peace of Jesus Christ. Where self-love reigns, we find sloth instead of

fervour, heartlessness in place of love and affection for others. By these signs you may detect the enemy. If your heart is full of genuine and simple love, it will be free from bitterness, it will be happy in the peace of Christ. If you are not at peace and happy, if you are disturbed, you may be sure the enemy has found an entrance, and you must drive him out.

What better occasion can you have for doing this than the day of our Saviour's Birth? See the Divine Infant lying on the bed of straw for love of you, gaze upon Him with the eyes of faith, and then refuse if you can to let your heart expand in tender affections, and to accept the gift of peace He offers to all who have hearts to love. Lay down once for all at His lowly Crib all stubbornness, resentment, sadness, self-seeking, and take from the Divine Infant the gentleness, the cheerfulness, the affectionate expansiveness you need in dealing with each other. Make a fresh start on this beautiful day, forgive one another, resolve to esteem and respect one another in charity, which charity cannot be perfect if it be not preceded by mutual esteem and accompanied by prudence. Prudence teaches us to avoid the least word that may offend, whether it be of contempt or censure, of useless complaint or reproach, rudeness in speech or excessive familiarity, boastful or arrogant remarks, any expression of irritation and resentment, or words that may occasion heated discussions and even dissensions. Let these and similar words be henceforth forbidden among you. I beg you all to form this resolution and to desire concord, union and peace as a most precious treasure. This desire of mutual union and peace must be generous, and so it will be if it comes from God. In other words each one must be disinterested, doing good for its own sake, without expecting others to be equally considerate towards himself. If he meets with no return from others, his reward will be the greater. But this prudence, this self-restraint and affability in your mutual intercourse, will not be perfect

unless it be accompanied by deep humility and submission to Superiors, and by readiness to take all their reproofs and penances in good part. The child of peace, who is the child of God, sincerely desires to be corrected and punished. Correction, far from making him lose confidence in his Superior, serves as a fresh bond of gratitude and affection.

You form, my dearest brothers, but one family. You ought all to love this family union in Jesus Christ, and to be ready to die for the Institute of Charity to which you have been called. If you are at heart united inseparably in this Society, each one will feel himself to be greater and happier, he will be conscious of support both spiritual and physical. Each one will feel that his own defects will be more readily pardoned by God, in whose sight the virtues of one will compensate for the faults of another, in virtue of the mutual communion of merits. Then, too, the great and meritorious work of the College and Elementary Schools of Domodossola will prosper and be blessed, through the instrumentality of those who contribute most largely to preserve union and peace. For your strength, my dear Brothers, lies in union, of which Christ is the bond; in union of hearts I say, in agreement and harmony of will, in subordination and perfect obedience to the Superior, who represents Jesus Christ in your midst, and consequently in the renunciation of all the instincts, thoughts and passions that lead to discord. If you are united in this way you will be strong, and this scholastic institution will be like an impregnable fortress, the source of incalculable good to your fellow-men.

Moreover each one of you who devotes himself earnestly to the maintenance of union and peace, will find therein interior consolation and perfect tranquillity. Let each one be quite satisfied and contented with the office he holds, loving it as coming from the hand of God; let his one thought be how to fulfil its duties worthily and to gain therefrom the greatest amount of merit. Let him check every thought of the future, every desire of

change, and repose with full confidence and self-abandonment in the Providence of God, daily arousing the ardour of his faith, and believing firmly that God is mindful of him and will guide him in the path of glory, unfading glory.

With all my heart I beseech the Infant Jesus Himself to imprint these doctrines on your minds, for it is His teaching, not mine. He has taught these truths: He only can give them virtue and efficacy. The love I bear you induces me to keep myself constantly informed about each one of you; so let each one understand that he will afford me the greatest consolation if I hear that he has become a man of charity, concord and peace. I hope that no one will let himself be outdone by the rest. May the blessing of God rest upon you!

A. R.

CCXI.

TO THE SCHOLASTICS OF THE INSTITUTE AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

*On the love of their vocation and the means of corresponding
with it.*

Stresa,

April 8th, 1853.

My dear sons in Christ,

Your letters bear witness to your common desire to serve God faithfully, they also inform me of your combats and your efforts and of your attachment to your vocation in this Institute, which takes its name from our Lord's own precept. I trust in that infinite goodness which has withdrawn you from the world, that it will enable you all to persevere unto the end, so that not even one may be found wanting in that day on which our Lord will distribute His rewards among

His servants. "Not he who begins but he who perseveres to the end shall be saved." Now in order to obtain this constancy and perseverance, it is very desirable that the spiritual man, without losing sight of any part of Christ's teaching, should choose some luminous point on which to concentrate his thoughts as a concise rule of conduct, which will guide him by the shortest route to his journey's end. Therefore I think you will be gratified if I point out to you the maxim I consider most useful for you to keep in mind and by which to shape your course.

This conspicuous point which is to be your guiding star, is a keen appreciation of your holy vocation, a profound esteem for it, jealous care to preserve this great gift and to understand every day better and better how noble and precious it is, how worthy of all the love of your heart. Indeed, with this weapon all vices are conquered, on this foundation all virtues are erected. It is an undoubted fact that no religious who sincerely and constantly loves his vocation can ever perish. It is equally true that no religious who is lovingly attached to his vocation can go on living a tepid life for any length of time. The love of our vocation and serious defects are incompatible. Either we must rid ourselves of these faults, or we shall lose our vocation, for these two things are opposed to each other. Hence whenever a soul becomes unfaithful to God and has the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, forthwith there ensues a coldness with respect to her vocation. On the other hand as often as a notable degree of carelessness about her vocation comes over the soul, it is an infallible sign that she has gone back in the way of virtue, and has defiled herself with deliberate faults, at least with those hidden faults which are sometimes difficult to detect. But this sign should rouse a man to a sense of his own condition; by diligent examination he will easily discover the baneful causes which have more or less drawn him aside from his holy purpose. Perhaps it may be a secret and corroding pride, or some resentment or wounded

self-love that embitters his soul, or a tendency to form rash judgments, or a censorious spirit, or habitual neglect of the Rules, the slothfulness that refuses to make some slight effort in time of prayer, unguarded feelings, a careless and torpid conscience which makes no account of many venial, even deliberate sins: in short, it is always some fault or other that weakens the perception of and attachment to one's vocation, that is, the state of perfection.

How earnestly the spiritual man must watch and pray, that he may attain to the knowledge of himself and of the secret workings of his own soul! For a continual secret working is going on in every soul either for good or evil. He who does not attentively watch this interior working and gradual transformation, may one day become aware of the fact that he is totally different from what he was formerly. He may find himself in a miserable state of spiritual languor or even mortal infirmity, without being able to account for this fatal result. How many through this negligence and thoughtlessness have cast away the inestimable gift of vocation, and have fallen from their place and been precipitated into eternal misery!

How can we escape so great a calamity? What are the best means, my dear sons, of avoiding such base ingratitude to that God who in His infinite goodness has chosen us and so highly favoured us that we may say with the Psalmist: "He has set me in a place of pasture?"

The first requisite, assuredly, is to have, not indeed a scrupulous but a delicate conscience, which shrinks from the very slightest offence against God and especially from all failings touching our vocation, a conscience which will urge us to the perfect observance of the vows, to simple obedience, and to perform like a faithful servant the duties of the office or occupation assigned to us by Superiors.

The second means is to use all possible diligence in keeping the soul tranquil, gentle, peaceable, equable and benevolent. What a treasure is the peace of Christ!

What progress is made by the soul that walks in this peace! What light is diffused upon her path! Such a soul, free from the turmoil of passions, from anger and bitterness, sees all things in the light of truth; she judges of things rightly, without allowing her imagination to alter facts, and readily distinguishes good from evil, flying from evil and embracing that which is good with simplicity and love. It behoves us therefore to be exceedingly jealous of this peace, and not allow it to be disturbed by any inordinate impulse; as soon as we begin to feel perturbed, we must hasten to bring back the heart to its former tranquillity. This is a point of great importance. "Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God."

The third means consists in making a diligent study of the spirit of the Institute of Charity to which you belong. If you be thoroughly imbued with this spirit, as briefly set forth in your Rules, you will learn to know and appreciate and love it more and more; day by day you will approach nearer and nearer in sentiment, action and habit to that perfection which the Institute expects of her children. It is impossible, certainly, for a man to feel much affection for what he scarcely gives a thought to, or makes any effort to obtain. Therefore you may consider it as a most important duty to love your Institute and to be deeply attached to it, as also to nourish and cultivate its spirit in yourselves. You should know and love its principles. You should be attached to your Superiors, and show your gratitude for their continual care and solicitude, and give them proofs of confidence and affection. Moreover you should be deeply attached to all your brothers, considering yourselves as forming one moral body, working in concord and good order for one end, which is God, having one and the same interest and object namely, the glory of God; forming one single family, nay, one heart and soul in Jesus Christ. Yes, my dear sons, each one of us may well rejoice and give thanks to God at the thought of being a member of this Society, which purposes, in so far as

human weakness permits, to fulfil *the precept of the Lord*: charity. In this holy and intimate union the spiritual good of one is likewise the good of all; the evils of one are the evils of all; their merits are in common. Even the offices, though distributed, are in common, because each one should in desire do the work that he is enabled to do and that which is assigned to others; because in your Institute all offices and occupations should be, and are, functions of the same charity of Jesus Christ, all are really doing the same thing, because all are practising charity, universal and unlimited charity, which is found in the aspirations, the will and the deeds of each one of us.

I trust that this charity will reign in your hearts. The servant of God can do more or less in proportion to his charity. Increase of love means increase of spiritual power, diminution of love diminution of power to do good. We must then enlarge our hearts. We are called by God to have a great heart wherewith to love much, and to scorn all that is little, narrow or mean. In this matter there should be a holy rivalry among you; he who loves most will find himself most strongly attached to his vocation. In fact, whilst endeavouring to strengthen your attachment to the Institute, I have been simply exhorting you to build on the solid foundation of the charity of Jesus Christ, which is the supreme law, the end, the means and the nature of the Institute you have embraced.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ impart efficacy to the words of your affectionate Father in Christ,

A.R.

CCXII.

TO THE CLERIC, VINCENZO CIAMBELLO AT
DOMODOSSOLA.

On the means of overcoming scruples.

Stresa,

January 28th, 1854.

My dear son in Christ,

Now that your Father Rector is returning to you, I will reply briefly to your letter. You will certainly be cured of the spiritual infirmities of which you tell me. They are produced by the *imagination* which is not sufficiently subdued and controlled by reason. You may conquer your enemy by strengthening your will in its good and holy resolutions. The will is strengthened by *repeated acts*, whereby we repel and disown all the suggestions of the imagination, which faculty is used by the devil to our ruin. You must therefore rise superior to yourself, and from the lofty height of a mind intent upon the love of God and His holy will, despise all the wild fancies and aberrations of a wayward imagination. Consider carefully the following maxims and adopt them for your guidance.

1st. What I am told to do is the will of God: therefore I must do it with all my might, and renounce every contrary thought and doubt.

2nd. Humiliation is good for me, it makes me like unto Jesus Christ; therefore I will love it above all things without enquiring whether it is justly inflicted or not.

3rd. Charity is my profession, my life: therefore I disown all sentiments, whatever they may be, that would lessen my charity towards my brothers; I renounce and repel them once for all.

4th. God thinks of me if I think of Him and of obedience; therefore I will check all thoughts regarding the future, I wish to enjoy the peace of Jesus Christ by doing my duty from day to day, and for all things else trusting to Providence.

5th. At present God requires me to apply myself earnestly to *study*; therefore I will do my best, cost what it may, and regard any practice of devotion that distracts me from this my principal occupation as ill-timed and inordinate. Superiors wish me to render myself capable of serving God by acquiring knowledge; therefore I should be to blame if through negligence I remained ignorant and consequently incapable of certain labours of charity for which God, through my Superiors, might destine me.

6th. Mere *feeling* is transient, most contemptible; therefore I will mortify it under my Superior's direction, in which I must recognize the guidance of God Himself.

If, as soon as a thought arises contrary to these maxims you drive it away and if you are faithful in acting thus over and over again and pray to God without ceasing, you will soon be quite another man. So take courage! May our Lady bless you and protect you! Adieu!

A. R.

CCXIII.

TO DON FELICE SCESA, MASTER OF NOVICES, AT
STRESA.

He sends him an old blind man as a gift to the Novitiate.

Stresa,

May 22nd, 1854.

My dear brother in the Lord,

The bearer is a gift I am sending you and your Novices. He is one of Christ's poor, blind from his birth, seventy years old and homeless. You will receive him as a guest, clothe and feed him and minister to all his wants, as representing among you the person of Jesus Christ. I desire that our Novices especially should consider the poor old man to be a real treasure, because he gives them an opportunity of showing their love for Jesus Christ, who thus comes to dwell among them. What a privilege is this! The poor blind man will draw down God's blessing on the House. I desire, moreover, that he should take his meals with the Community, dispensing in this instance, from the rule which excludes strangers from our common table. Adieu!

A. R.

SECTION IV.

To Ecclesiastics.

I.

TO D. ANTONIO BASSICH AT CATTARO.

On the conversion of Greek Schismatics.

Rovereto,

December 27th, 1824.

The immense distance between us has no power, dear Antonio, to separate our souls. Oh my God! How great, how well-nigh immense are our souls! Well may we exult and appreciate their nature when we look at the lower condition of our body. Where one body is, another cannot be: if it is removed but a short distance, we can neither see it nor touch it nor derive pleasure from it. Thanks be to Him who has made us so much nobler and purer and more delicate than our native clay! Therefore, dear Bassich, let us love more than ever the Father who has made these human souls of ours partakers of the Divine nature. Partakers do I say? Nay, over and above this, He has endowed them with a new and ineffable life, hidden however in Him, for the world sees nothing of our greatness in Jesus Christ. We should therefore value it all the more, for the innate pride of Adam is conquered when we rejoice in the invisible greatness of our humanity. The heavens and the earth were formed not for our glory, but for the glory of the grace of Jesus Christ. I rejoice to hear that this grace which we desire should conquer and dominate the whole earth, is making progress in your country.

I have no doubt that the Author of so rich a grace will give efficacy to our words. Without Him what would they be but empty sounds beating the air? But with His help what may not be effected even by these same words? I shall be very pleased to hear further particulars. As you are amongst the Greeks, Catholics will be in the minority. You should use every means to confute the errors of the Schismatics, and will perhaps find that you can best attain this end by avoiding controversy. Would it not be useful to write a small book using brief and cogent but at the same time persuasive reasons to refute their errors? Would not such a book obtain ready circulation? You should begin by drawing from your opponents themselves their principal errors and objections. This will enable you to understand the snares in which they are involved, to grasp the point of view from which they look at things, their mode of thinking, all the characteristics in short of their present unfortunate condition; and I think there is a great difference between the knowledge obtained from books and that acquired by personal intercourse with your opponents. I shall be happy to assist you when you have taken the first step.

The panegyric of Pius VII is not printed yet; but it will be out shortly and I will send it. It is some time since I have written to or heard from our excellent friend Cappellari; we always mention your name. Here we frequently speak of you with affection. How pleased I should be to see you! But we must content ourselves, as I have said, with seeing each other in spirit, until we meet in heaven, where we shall see one another in God.

Pray for your friend,

A. R.

II.

TO THE CLERIC, BARON GIULIO TODESCHI AT TRENT.

On the Roman Breviary

Rovereto,

June 7th, 1825.

I take this occasion of speaking to you of the Divine Office, and paying my debt to you at the same time. If I am brief you must not think me parsimonious, but rather take it as a sign that I do not consider even this much necessary for you.

In the early days of the Church, there being as yet no Saints to honour, there were no feasts but the Sundays. Christians, knowing that man must ever raise his mind to God from what is profane and that all days are holy, conceived the idea of sanctifying them all by prayer. Hence they distributed the Psalter throughout the seven days of the week, adding each day one of the seven canticles found in the Sacred Scriptures, with appropriate hymns, a lesson from the Old Testament or one of the Epistles, a passage from the Gospel and various prayers. Thus was composed the first and most ancient portion of the breviary, that used for ferias. To this book of canonical hours three other parts were added later, several feasts having been established to celebrate more particularly the mysteries of Jesus Christ or in honour of the Blessed Virgin, the Martyrs, and the Confessors; the first among the latter to receive this honour being, if I remember rightly, St. Martin of Tours. The distinction had then to be drawn between the movable and immovable feasts. The movable feasts are those dependent on Easter, which is reckoned by the lunar year, and falls always on the Sunday nearest

to the 14th day of the moon in March. The lunar month having only twenty-eight days whereas the solar month has thirty, it follows that this day which is always the same in the lunar month is not so in the month by which we ordinarily reckon. Thus Easter falling now on one day now on another of our common calendar affects all those solemnities dependent on it or in relation with it (*e.g.*, the Sundays of the whole year); the same applies to the ferias in so far as they have lessons adapted to the time in which they occur. During the course of the year the Church celebrates the fundamental truths and mysteries of religion, especially by means of the movable feasts of which Easter is the chief, for this feast contains the essence of the Church's worship, for the feasts of those Saints which are not closely connected with the sacred mysteries are not essential. Hence feasts which occur between these movable festivals have lessons adapted to the season and thus form the second part of the breviary. The third and fourth parts contain those Saints' festivals which occur on fixed days throughout the year. There is no difference between them except that the fourth part (which is placed at the end of our breviaries) contains the psalms arranged for each class of Saint, for the apostles, martyrs, confessors, pontiffs, virgins or widows, whether one or more be commemorated on the same day; whilst the third part contains the proper of each feast, the lessons relating to the Saint's life, &c. By way of recapitulation, you will find in the breviary first, the ferias or days on which no Saint is commemorated; then the movable feasts with the proper of their ferias; thirdly the immovable feasts, that is, those of the Saints, and here you will find first what is peculiar to each and then what is common to all.

But why should I be giving you a description of the method observed in the Divine Office, when you have already been reciting it several days? In this however I have but done your bidding. Happy are you to be already reciting it! Well do I realize how powerful a means of

sanctification and consolation is provided by this form of prayer, so dear to all the Saints. Not only does the whole Church chant the Divine Office, but all ages have concurred in compiling it; Moses, David, the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself, the Apostles, the Sovereign Pontiffs, all have had a share in its composition. So exquisite and varied is the nourishment provided for the spirit, that no one can fail to be satiated. I am filled with indignation when I think of certain people, who cannot appreciate anything spiritual and find cause for complaint in this volume, which I do not hesitate to call Divine. Let us at least hold it dear and read it with devotion, that so our spirit may ascend to God, and find therein fruit and solace. For in truth, my dear Giulio, the devout celebration of Mass and recitation of the Breviary suffices to sanctify us priests.

Show this letter to our good friends, the clerics. And let us love each other in the Lord. Good-bye,

Your affectionate friend,

A. R.

. III.

TO N. N. A PRIEST.

He urges him to drive away gloomy thoughts.

Milan,

May 5th, 1826.

I am grateful for your remembrance of me, though we were but a short time together at Recoaro. Your letter, with the ode, reached me at Milan. From one and the other I gather that your mind is overshadowed by some sadness or tribulation. This has enlisted my fullest sympathy, and most earnestly do I entreat you to take courage and not yield to melancholy. You know St. Philip's saying ; "In my house I will have neither scruples nor melancholy." Let us cultivate a holy cheerfulness, not a boisterous, worldly joy, which dissipates the spirit, but that gentle and tranquil gladness which springs from a pure conscience and the grace of the Holy Ghost producing in our hearts resignation to the Divine will. How delightful it is to serve God with all our heart and to correspond with the sublime duties of our vocation ! I am convinced that we shall find peace and rest when we place our happiness in what is firm and substantial, and allow all else to pass by.

I am glad to hear you take to poetry only as a pastime. Poetry for us can only be a trifle to amuse and recreate the jaded spirit. We are priests, not poets. I should also advise you to avoid all secular and worldly society and to make acquaintance with some good priests in whose society you will find innocent and suitable recreation. Devotion to Our Lady has also a marvellous power in calming a troubled mind ; the benign light of this our star is a comfort in every danger. Pray for me to Mary, and believe me to be your affectionate and obedient servant,

A. R.

IV.

TO DON GIULIO TODESCHI AT MEZZOTEDESCO.

Of the Daughters of Charity. Memories of St. Charles at Milan.

Milan,

May 9th, 1826.

Dear friend ! I think this is what you would like me to call you, even as I love to be so addressed by my brother priests. Your letter commences with a subject welcome to me, the Daughters of Charity. Yes, I hope they will soon be established at Trent. The Emperor has given a convent to the excellent Madame Canossa, and some Tyrolese Sisters are waiting to take possession. It is only necessary to repair the building, which may cause some delay as it is in a bad condition. All will be set straight before long, however, through the kindness of our Vicar General who has shown himself full of zeal. What you say about my sister coming to Trent as superior is not correct ; she is a simple novice, who will be sent in due time to the house deemed most suitable by her superior.

As you wish to know the general object of this Institute, let me tell you that it is to take special care of those who are most neglected and most despised and who are therefore dearest to our Divine Master, namely the very poor. The Sisters assist sick women in the hospitals, teach the catechism under the direction of the parish priest in church, if he desires it, and keep a school where poor girls are taught reading, writing, needlework, &c. They also extend their care to the improvement of education in rural districts by receiving into their convent for seven months in the year, intelligent girls of the peasant class with a

view to training them to take charge of village schools. After caring for the wants of the poor, the Daughters of Charity, if they have time and strength, turn their attention to those in better circumstances. In large cities, as here at Milan, they do great good, by receiving pious ladies into their convent at a certain time of the year, for the purpose of making retreats. The Milanese ladies have lately availed themselves of the opportunity with great edification. The life of these good Sisters is all charity as their name indicates. It is a life of active and robust virtue. For the support of their own spiritual strength there are the community exercises, notably mental prayer, which is the great means of keeping alive the flame of Divine love. The virtue I myself have seen in these good Sisters is marvellous: perfect and unalterable friendship, great purity of conscience, which together with liberty of spirit and an unfailing cheerfulness, renders their incessant labour light and sweet.

The Jubilee at Milan is very edifying, not so much on account of the order maintained as for the devotion of the people, which is greater than some imagine. This city pleases me more than any I have seen, for its inhabitants are singularly attached to religion, and their devotion is solid. On all sides we find memorials of the great work achieved by St. Charles Borromeo, not only in the magnificent edifices with which the city is adorned, but what is more important, in the good and noble sentiments diffused among clergy and people, which seem to pass like an heirloom from father to son. In this way he has built an interior city and erected magnificent structures in the heavenly Jerusalem. How many fail to see these things because they are spiritual! Let us thank the Divine Goodness that we see them and rejoice greatly at the sight.

No doubt you are amassing a store of merits in the service of souls whilst a crown is being prepared for you elsewhere. What joy you must feel when you read the words of the Gospel: "He that shall do and teach shall be

called great in the kingdom of heaven." Pray to our Lord that I may profit by the many good examples I have continually before my eyes and may amend my defects. Farewell.

A. R.

V.

TO DON GIOVANNI STEFANI AT LISBON.

On the happiness of being a Christian.

Milan,

September 13th, 1826.

Your kind letter reached me to-day and shall have an immediate answer. You speak of having written from Caldas, but I received nothing. I am glad you are to remain, because I feel sure you will be of assistance to your pupil. Do all you can to make him appreciate the dignity of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, that immense, that Divine society which deserves all our love and should be the object of all our thoughts. Beautiful is human friendship, but far more beautiful the love of Holy Church. Domestic affections are praiseworthy, praiseworthy is the love of our birthplace, our native land. But the ties of kindred, home and country should only be so many means of promoting the glory of God's Church; to the Christian they are but part of a greater and more excellent society. Since our family and nation are so privileged as to be contained in the Church of Jesus Christ, should not the part be subservient to the whole? Seek to impress this truth upon your pupil. Happy will he be if he receive the impression and carry it through life uncanceled! Happy will you be in any case to have made the attempt! As regards merit in the sight of God, the mere effort to give a faithful son to the Church is equivalent to success. I hope your pupil will

succeed; you most certainly will do good to your own soul.

I have been now six months at Milan. I delight in the memory of St. Charles: on every side, alike in the material edifices and in the hearts of the people who have inherited his spirit, touching memorials of the Saint are to be found. I think it would be difficult to find a more devotional city. In these six months much has happened that I should like to talk over with you. Is there any chance of your coming to Italy? If you were to come to Genoa I should lose no time in meeting you. Let me hear from you, and tell me all about your surroundings and occupations. Maurizio and Nicolò are with me and wish to be remembered to you. I pray God to bless you, and do you remember in His presence your friend,

A. R.

VI.

TO DON PAOLO ORSI AT ROVERETO.

A good heart is better than great talents.

Milan,

January 27th, 1827.

You wish to know how I would answer this question: Is it better to have a good head and a bad heart, or a dull brain and a good heart? My answer, as you know already, is your own. The principal reasons would seem to be:

1. Talent is a gift, the use we put it to depends on ourselves. Now talent of itself affords no guarantee of being well employed, rather may it tempt us to abuse the gift. The heart, on the contrary, inclines us to make a proper use of such talent as we may possess. More valuable therefore are the *qualities of the heart*, which give a right direction

to our actions; *virtue*, in fact, is the only thing in man deserving of praise, inasmuch as it is his own.

2. Talent if abused does not make us happy. The heart on the contrary, by inclining us to virtue helps us to attain happiness. This is proved by experience and history. Solomon, Origen, Tertullian, not to mention the arrogant philosophers of Greece and other nations, were ruined by their talents.

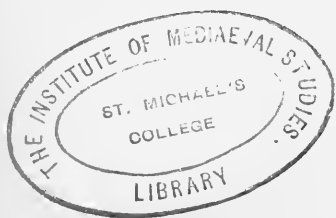
3. Jesus Christ never praised the qualities of the intellect, but always those of the heart.

4. Intellect we have in common with the demons the worst of beings, not so the heart.

5. Men prefer a *good heart* to great talents. Men of genius are distrusted even by the world and, as a rule, have many enemies, whilst the good are loved by all.

Having thus answered your questions I must conclude in haste. With the help of Divine grace, I think I am getting through more work than usual. I see clearly that it is the will of God that I should remain away. It will be four years at least before I can finish the work on which I am engaged. It seems to grow under my hands. The Lord really strews flowers for me upon these rugged paths, where many great minds have miserably fallen. Adieu! Yours,

ROSMINI.



VII.

TO DON ANTONIO VITTADINI, PARISH PRIEST OF
BESATE.

His stay at Calvario.

Calvario,

May 22nd, 1828.

Your letter came to me in my solitude like some dear and unexpected friend. It is full of a fragrance far better than that of the flowery meadows in this most beautiful month of the year. How inviting is the prospect of passing a fortnight in your society, enjoying the quiet country life, and conversing and planning with my friend! I was touched too at the thought of witnessing the piety of your good parishioners. If I could, I would hasten to enjoy the hospitality graced with such rare splendour.

I have been three months in this place: the air, the quiet and rest are most beneficial to my health. The hill is dedicated to the Passion, and the very charms of Nature are thereby sanctified; so that you will perceive I have reason to love this spot. Nevertheless the path is not closed behind me, and will I hope serve for my return. Not sooner, however, than July as far as I can tell. I shall then have the pleasure of visiting my dear Don Vittadini in his home at Besate. I shall not be able to stay long, but I think I can spare a few days.

As for the "enactment" you propose, to the effect that we should mutually pray for each other and uplift our hands to Heaven in the august Sacrifice for the good cause—let it be the *constitution* of our friendship. Thus we shall be "constitutionalists," and our Constitution will be one of true friendship and intimacy.

You are no doubt absorbed in study. I am not doing much, and yet, taking into consideration my feeble powers, I am astounded at the amount I accomplish. It seems to me a miracle of God's goodness! How kind and long-suffering He is with me! Write to me frequently. Think not that God who has united us in a friendship of which He alone is the object, and to which He imparts all the tenderness, intends that we should be so separated as to derive no advantage therefrom. You will not lose me nor I you. I am not alluding merely to the common centre where we can enjoy a union unknown to the world; but I would express a hope that we shall be able to meet and exchange our thoughts as of old. Meanwhile do not cease to love me, and be assured that I am happy to possess your friendship and equally anxious to prove myself your friend.

A. R.

VIII.

TO DON GIUSEPPE BRUNATI AT BRESCIA.

Tribulations are a gift from God.

Calvario,

Feast of St. Aloysius, 1828.

Certainly, as you say, the greatest gift God can bestow on us is an opportunity of suffering something for His love. Without suffering, we should be eternally miserable, for we should become lovers of ourselves and of earthly things which are but vanity and misery; we should be spiritually blind, incapable of distinguishing our true happiness and deprived of true interior life. Therefore, as you bid me, I must certainly reckon, as indeed I do, amongst the greatest of God's mercies those bodily ailments which beset me, for they rouse me and in part reveal me to myself. Death alone will

complete the revelation. You say you have received some great lessons this year from Him who alone truly loves you, and seeks to perfect you by hard blows. This I understand from the expressions you use. The thorough appreciation of the life of perfection shown in your letter; your prizing it as an ineffable grace of God, as wealth beyond measure, out of all proportion to earthly things; your ardour which increases far from diminishing; all these are signs that God in His mercy destines you to a life more intimately, completely and absolutely devoted to His service, than the secular life, or mere literary occupations. I congratulate you on this vocation. Our Blessed Lady, St. Ignatius and St. Aloysius will complete the work they have commenced in your soul.

I shall be passing by Brescia towards the end of July on my way to Recoaro. What a pleasure it would be to see you! But who knows where you will be? Adieu! I do not speak of studies because there will be time later. I suppose you have received my *Opuscoli*.

All is well here. I desire only to love God to whom be the greatest possible honour and glory for ever and ever!

A. R.

IX.

TO HIS HOLINESS POPE GREGORY XVI.

On the occasion of his election to the Pontificate.

Calvario,

February 15th, 1831.

After offering heartfelt thanks to the Divine Majesty for having answered our humble prayers and given a Head to the Holy Church in the person of Your Holiness, I should fail in my duty, did I not present myself by letter at least, not being able to do so in person to express my own special exultation amid the general exultation of the Faithful, and my unbounded devotion to the person of Your Holiness and to this Holy See, which is the tender Mother of all the Faithful and consequently the object of their filial devotion. And although I proposed to defer this act of filial attachment until the press of the throng round the throne of Your Holiness was over, still the token of clemency which Your Holiness deigned to accord me by sending me a message through His Eminence Cardinal Morozzo, forbids my deferring any longer the expression of those sentiments of gratitude and respect, which I trust are already well known to Your Holiness, and which I could with difficulty find words to express.

I shall not fail to offer without ceasing my poor prayers to God for Your Holiness and for the Church which you govern; and kissing your feet, I humbly implore for myself, and the lowly Institute of Charity which with me prostrates itself and offers itself to Your Holiness, the Apostolic Benediction.

Of Your Holiness

The most humble, faithful and devoted servant,

ANT. ROSMINI.

X.

TO THE PRIESTS LISSANDRINI AND TARUGGI AT
ARONA.

He consents to become their spiritual director.

Calvario,

February 28th, 1831.

Reverend and dear brother-priests in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom alone be honour and glory.

I beg you to excuse me for not having answered sooner the letter informing me that you remain constant to your original plan, and also that you still desire to have me, worthless as I am, for your spiritual father. My occupations have hindered me from writing to you during the last few days, as I would gladly have done. To-day I hope to have more leisure.

In the first place, having commended the matter to our Lord, I do not refuse such assistance as I can give you in attaining the object of your desires, for they seem to be praiseworthy and tending to the glory of God. I shall therefore, in undertaking your direction, consider you as an offshoot of my own dear family at Calvario. "What a good and pleasant thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" By this union I understand that we should abide together in God, who is, as it were, our spiritual abode, where it is sweet to meet and dwell together. I must first tell you something of a matter which I believe to be indispensable for the realization of your holy desires. There is a maxim upon which as a foundation stone the little society of Calvario rests; as long as this fundamental maxim is faithfully maintained, I doubt not that God will bless the Society and those who practise it. This

maxim is simple, humble and easy to understand, yet we have no other basis of conduct, and all our regulations as well as all those which will be introduced at a future time, have no other source or origin than this maxim. It is the following: "we must so earnestly take heed to ourselves, as to value nothing except in reference to the salvation and perfection of our own souls," and regard all that concerns our neighbour merely as means of pleasing God or sanctifying ourselves.

This maxim excludes that false zeal which renders people more anxious about their neighbour's salvation than their own, the offspring of secret pride, through which a man shrinks from considering his own shortcomings and presumes to think himself necessary to his neighbour, as though his own affairs were all settled and in good order. This mode of acting is also a sign of little faith in the Goodness and Providence of God, as though He did not watch over mankind with a Father's care, without need of our assistance. Ah! he who comes to know God and himself, will deem himself to be useless, he will remain in humility wholly occupied with his own sanctification, weeping over his sins and labouring day and night to amend. This is the great and laborious task which we must take in hand, my dear friends, and we certainly shall do so if we are convinced that the only state which befits us is the abject and despised condition of penitents. Moreover, if we are deeply penetrated by these great truths, we shall never of our own accord take upon ourselves responsibilities or dignities or anything else, unless constrained thereto by obedience or at least by the fear of resisting the Divine will and of withstanding God, whom alone we desire to possess. Let us consider seriously that when we have obtained the amendment and purification of our own souls, and consequently justice and union with God, we have obtained so much that nothing remains to desire; we have obtained *all*, we are satiated, blessed. To what then shall we direct our thoughts if not to that which Jesus Christ taught us when He said: "One thing

only is necessary"? On this point we must render our mind and heart simple and sincere, for in this one thing consists the simplicity of the Christian life.

Unfortunately as long as we live in this world, our mind is filled with a multitude of notions which are false though they appear to be pious, and our heart is filled with vain and useless desires which seem to be religious. No, no, let us rid our minds of these encumbrances, and our hearts of these vain delusions, let us bring ourselves to that simplicity of thought and feeling which is taught by the Gospel. Our mind and heart should have but one object: that is, purity of conscience, a relish for the word of Jesus Christ, the possession of God. What a relief it will be to get rid of the galling load laid upon us by our secret pride and the presumptuous teaching of the world! "Come ye all to me;" said Jesus Christ for this very reason.—In short, let the one only object of our union be the salvation and perfection of our own souls. This is the one aim of the Society at Calvario, and its future depends upon our thorough understanding of this simple aim. Having prefaced a remark on this fundamental principle, which is the special and distinguishing feature of the Institute, I will offer you the following advice for the present.

Each of you should have a little book, entitled "Rules," where you will note down those rules and means which I shall propose to you according as opportunity and necessity may require. The first rule will be this: *The end of this Society is the salvation and perfection of our own souls.* I shall further suggest certain pious practices intended to assist in the purification of our souls, and these must be undertaken with courage and persevered in faithfully. 1st. *Meditation* every morning. This should last for an hour, and should, if possible, be made without a book, on the subject-matter prepared by reading the previous evening. This practice is fundamental, and is like a weight which keeps the whole person evenly balanced. 2nd. A short examination of conscience should be made before dinner and in the evening. In the 3rd place, it would be desir-

able for you to meet together at least once a week for a spiritual conference upon such topics as are best calculated to move the heart to compunction, to purify the soul, and to maintain that recollection, gravity and maturity which should distinguish a priest. I think you may begin with these three practices; and if you find you can manage them write down in your little books this second rule: *Let everyone be careful to employ with all diligence in the Lord, the time set apart every day for the two examinations of conscience, for meditation and for spiritual conferences.* I trust that if you adopt these few practices, earnestly and with perseverance, you will in a short time derive therefrom great contentment and consolation, for it is by means of long and earnest meditation that one learns to know oneself and God, to value one's union with the highest Good, and to count all else as nothing.

I shall expect you, after some time, to tell me what progress you make, and what difficulties you encounter in these exercises (and the devil will certainly do his best to hinder you); anything in fact that concerns yourselves will give me great pleasure. One thing I strongly recommend is that you should read more than once very carefully the little book with which you are already acquainted, the "Maxims of Christian Perfection;" for it can be appreciated only by much study and meditation. Finally let us all be closely united in the love of Jesus Christ. The love we bear one another will be the token of our being His disciples. Let us pray without ceasing; and in our prayer let us be but one heart and soul, as also in the breaking of that Bread which is our common nourishment, which animates us with the same life and is the symbol of our union. Live Jesus, the Vine of which we are the branches. Live Mary, our tender Mother and our hope, the main branch of that vine!

Your devoted brother-priest,

A. R.

XI.

TO DON PIETRO BRUTI AT PRASO.

On patience whilst waiting to enter the religious state.

Trent,

June 8th, 1832.

Dear Rev. Sir,

Sometimes our Lord contents Himself with our good desires, and prefers the will to the deed: this is your case. Have no doubts, but continue to make your sacrifice complete, and to attach yourself ever more closely to His Divine Majesty. Abandoning ourselves to Him, we shall remain in perfect peace and contentment even whilst waiting; for the virtue and perfection we are seeking consists simply in being content to do the will of our Lord. O blessed conformity to the will of God! This is the way to true peace. If it please God, the time will come when He will draw us into religion. In the meantime let us bless Him for everything; let us deny ourselves; let us prepare ourselves with much prayer for what He may deign to do with us. Sometimes he wishes us to be worthy of certain graces before bestowing them on us, sometimes He wishes us to pray for them with constancy and resignation. You will find these thoughts expressed in the little book of the *Maxims*; read it over and over again. Pray also for me.

A. R.

XII.

TO MGR. SARDAGNA, BISHOP OF CREMONA.

On the happiness of those who trust in Providence and in the intercession of our Blessed Lady.

Calvario,

Vigil of the Assumption, 1832.

Your Lordship's letter of the 8th inst., containing intelligence of the happy thought with which Mary has inspired you, brought me unspeakable consolation. Lose no time in carrying it into execution ; by corresponding to this inspiration you will acquire a new title to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, our dearest Mother, from whom we must expect every light and support. Yes, our dear Mother Mary will inundate your heart with consolation and fill your mind with that tranquillity and peace which are so necessary ; and I, unworthy as I am, pray daily that this may be your portion. Let us abandon ourselves to Divine Providence, and trust in the goodness of Jesus Christ and the intercession of His holy Mother. We must not be too solicitous, and then we shall not repent of this confidence and this abandonment. It is true that we are miserable creatures, and have many defects. And who has not ? But the grace of Jesus Christ can purify us in a moment. What better means can there be of obtaining this grace, our only good, than labouring for His glory, and solely for His glory ? Far from us be any other thought. If we think only of our Heavenly Father and forget ourselves, He will think of us. He is lord of all, and in His hands are all that we have and are, wealth, health, life and death. He slays and gives life. In Him alone let us trust with full confidence. How sweet and consoling

is the thought that we are in the hands of God! We cannot be disheartened if we have faith; all things, even our very failures, enter into His designs. Let us then be content with everything; let us love this Divine Providence more and more, let us follow its guidance, and we shall be led sweetly along the path of salvation and of that peace which "passeth all understanding."

I have been consoled here, having found everything in good order. God be praised for all things! He alone knows all. Kissing your hand and imploring your pastoral benediction, &c.

A. R.

XIII.

TO DON PIETRO BRUTI AT PRASO.

On preparation for the religious life.

Trent,

September 19th, 1832.

My dear brother in the Lord,

Your letter, which was forwarded to me by the Father Rector Brunati, is an evidence of the sincerity of your desires; desires which certainly come from God, because no one can go to our Lord unless drawn by the Father; desires which cannot fail to be realized, for blessed is he who hungers and thirsts after justice. Persevere, therefore, since the greatest of all God's gifts is a vocation to His perfect service. He will console us sooner or later by giving us a home in some religious community under the guidance of obedience; or perchance we shall find this home only in heaven and we shall make our vows in the eternal tabernacles. Let us be resigned in everything to His Adorable Will; let us desire nothing beyond it. But at the same time let us implore

Him to draw us out of the land of Egypt and lead us into the land of Promise, as Religion truly is. I am glad to hear you are preparing for your entrance into the "land flowing with milk and honey," which certainly does not "devour its inhabitants" as those of little faith imagine. You will find the reading of good books a great help, as also the practice of religious virtues, such as humility, poverty, mortification, simplicity, charity, abandonment to Providence, and above all continual prayer.

But you will ask: When may I expect to join you? Is the future all uncertain? My dear friend, all I can say for certain is that we must go on preparing ourselves for detachment from all things, purifying ourselves and acquiring solid virtues. Then I think that during the vacation, at the latest, you might come here to make a retreat for a week or fortnight; you will then deliberate on the matter in the light of eternal truth and we shall be able to come to some arrangement. In the meantime let us consider each other as brothers in Christ, let us be united in spirit, and let our prayers ascend together to God. This union will be in the charity of our Lord with but one aim in view, union with Him and detachment from creatures. It would be a good thing if you sent me an account of yourself, with all sincerity, once a month.

This is what I advise you to do, without nourishing the least curiosity to know the moments of God. Do not, however, relax in fervour, rather try to increase it, sighing after the "holy mountain," and accustoming yourself to the exercises of religious life. Remember me to Don Rigger and all our friends. Pray for us all, and especially for the most needy of all, your servant,

A. R.

XIV.

TO MGR. SARDAGNA, BISHOP OF CREMONA.

He advises the Bishop not to resign his See.

Trent,

June 10th, 1833.

You ask me whether you can insist on resigning your See, the Holy Father being favourable, if the authorities at Vienna urge you to remain. In the first place it seems to me, that the Holy Father's declaration cannot be said to be either positively favourable or adverse to your design ; for the Holy Father has given you no counsel whatever, and has even expressed his regret at your resignation. It is true that he has promised not to oppose your desire and to accept the resignation ; but it is one thing to be unwilling to force you to remain against your own will and extreme repugnance, and another thing to approve of your resigning or to advise such a step.

I am inclined to think that the only inference to be drawn from the answer of His Holiness is that he leaves the matter entirely to your conscience and your good sense. With regard to insisting on the point, my opinion, as you are aware, always has been and still is, that unless you feel such insuperable repugnance and continual disquietude as to hinder you from performing your duties, you will do more good to your own soul and to others by remaining at your post than by leaving it. I am sure that you will be able to find persons who will relieve you of many cares, and afford you spiritual comfort, if only you try to find them. I am also firmly persuaded that even on the episcopal throne you can practise the virtues of the strictest and most exemplary religious, by overcoming yourself

and your own inclinations ; for it is precisely in this renunciation of self that the perfection of the Gospel consists, since "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." As Bishop you have occasion to confess the Gospel in face of the whole world, to preach it and to suffer for justice' sake. What more can we want, if we love and seek for Jesus Christ? Let me remind you of St. John, who was so old and infirm that he could only have himself carried into the Church and repeat the same words always, "Children love one another," yet he never thought of withdrawing from his office. To say that you are not St. John, might be an expression of humility, concealing a device of the enemy. I say all this only in case you should be urged to remain at your post, and I speak with full persuasion and solely on account of my sincere attachment to your Lordship.

My sister is at the point of death, but God is omnipotent. On Thursday we intend to offer special supplications for her recovery, if this be for the greater glory of God. I beg you also to pray and ask others to do the same. Asking your blessing, with profound respect and gratitude, &c.

A. R.

XV.

TO THE SAME.

He again dissuades the Bishop from resigning his See.

Rovereto,

February 2nd, 1834.

With regard to the observations you make in your letter of the 1st of January, it was my intention to assure you that I do not at all confound the question of your resignation with the question of your vocation to the Institute of Charity. As to the latter point, I have already declared several times that I should have no difficulty in receiving you, provided that, on examination, you find the nature of the Institute in harmony with your own spirit. Therefore there is nothing more to be said on the second question, and it has no relation to the first.

Now as for the matter of the resignation of your See, I beg you to consider attentively that whatever good is done to your neighbour is done to your own soul also. Jesus Christ has expressly declared that He will consider as done to Himself any good done to our neighbour. Now tell me calmly whether, in the event of your resignation, you will ever be able to do as much for your neighbour as you can with your present means and opportunities. Then you may decide whether it is advisable, in the spiritual traffic wherein we are all engaged, to throw away or to bury the talents God has given you. Tell me whether, shut up in a monastery you can do a tithe of the good effected by the institution alone in your diocese of the Daughters of Charity. Tell me whether the merit you can gain by the distribution of the riches now at your disposal, can be compared to the merit you would gain in retirement. It is Jesus Christ who has

furnished you with the means you have in your possession, and He will certainly demand a reckoning one day, saying: "I gave thee five talents." Will you be able to answer: "Lord, thou didst indeed give me those means of doing good, but I have renounced them: ask my successor about them?"

You will say: "I have so many things to think about in my present position that I cannot attend quietly to the needs of my soul." But I reply with St. Gregory: *do what you can, Jesus Christ is good; His Blood will supply for the deficiencies of His servant who sacrifices himself for Him.* If you cannot take St. Charles for your model, imitate St. Francis of Sales; read his life and copy him as closely as you can in his gentleness, not only towards others but towards self as well. We must be gentle even with ourselves and not exact too much from our feeble nature. This gentleness is charity and humility combined. Let us be persuaded of our own nothingness and then we shall always be at peace; we shall not even be irritated or disturbed at finding ourselves good for nothing. Let us cast ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ, who will bear the burden of all our miseries and imperfections!

A. R.

XVI.

TO DON SIMON ZENI AT LAVIS.

He exhorts Don Zeni to trust in God, even when separated from the Institute.

Rovereto,

February 15th, 1836.

It was a great pleasure to receive your letter and I thank you for it with all my heart. Its sentiments are such as cannot fail to draw down on you the blessing of God. In the removal of the Institute from Trent we must adore the hidden designs of Providence, and remain firm in our first resolution of serving God with our whole heart. Though we be divided as regards visible bonds of union, yet we remain united by the ineffable link of the charity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember the difficulties encountered by all religious orders in the beginning; remember St. Ignatius, St. Alphonsus Liguori and all holy Founders without exception. Devote yourself now to the work of your own sanctification in the office in which God has placed you. Win souls to God; let this be your sole aim in all you do. When you least expect it God will make you feel all the sweetness of His service. Write to me from time to time. You will always find me at your service; in me you have a faithful friend. Above all, pray for me in my weakness and sinfulness, pray for one who will always be mindful of you wherever he may go. Adieu!

A. R.

XVII.

TO MGR. BAINES BISHOP OF SIGA AT PRIOR PARK.

On sending some members of the Institute to England.

S. Michele della Chiusa,

July 12th, 1837.

With the present letter, I am sending your Lordship a second detachment of my companions, as an earnest of my desire to meet your wishes, which were made known to me by Father Gentili and by your Lordship's Vicar General. I recommend them warmly to your charity. I trust that my companions who are to serve your Lordship under Gentili's direction, will fulfil their duties faithfully, and correspond with their vocation. They have all given proof of solid virtue, and the first of them Don Giovanbattista Pagani, is really an excellent man in every way, and would be capable of governing a Community. He was Superior of the Seminary at Novara, and is the author of several works which are much esteemed; he might succeed Rey in the theology classes. If your Lordship will be good enough to inform me of the conduct of my companions after some little time, it will serve for my guidance.

With sentiments of the most profound esteem, &c.

A. R.

XVIII.

TO DON PAOLO ORSI AT ROVERETO.

On the death of his old master, Don Pietro Orsi.

Monte Calvario,

July 26th, 1837.

I cannot tell you how grieved I am at the loss of my oldest, dearest and most faithful friend. You may measure my sorrow by your own. This unexpected and untoward event is a fresh proof that we must detach ourselves from all, and that God alone is never wanting to us. Let us take the lesson to heart, and attach ourselves to that life which never fails because it is eternal. It would be vain to seek other comfort for you or for myself: there is none. "I am the resurrection and the life." "Even though he be dead he shall yet live." All the same I beg you will gratify my human feelings by giving me details of the illness and last moments of the dear deceased. I need not say that I have already offered pious suffrages for his soul and will continue to do so.

A. R.

XIX.

TO DON PAOLO BAROLA AT ROME.

An answer to some objections raised against the perfection required of members of the Institute.

Domodossola,

July 28th, 1837.

I am deeply grateful for your letter of the 19th inst. and your report of the state of affairs.

In order to solve the difficulty you mention, that the perfection contemplated in the Constitutions is too high and that too much is expected of human nature, you need only consider:—

1st. That nothing in the Constitutions is obligatory under pain of sin, except the vows, and what is commanded in virtue of holy obedience, (as is the case in all religious orders) or what is already contained in the law of God.

2nd. In no religious order, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, does a religious pretend to be perfect, for the religious state is a school of perfection, and consequently presupposes imperfection in those who frequent it. Our Constitutions describe the Institute as a school of perfection, and not as a union of perfect men. This may be seen in the very first paragraph, where the Society is defined as a union of persons desirous of the *discipleship* of Christ, and united for the purpose of assisting one another in the pursuit of perfection.

3rd. The perfection that is proposed in this school is indeed lofty, but it is no other than that of which Christ has given the form and example to all, and it would be impossible for us to find any other.

4th. The Constitutions certainly inculcate that subjects

should be indifferent to all commands of superiors (as do St. Basil and all other holy Founders in their rules), but on the other hand superiors are admonished to use all discretion and not to impose burdens beyond the strength of their subjects. The end of the Institute is the spiritual perfection of the members who compose it, and not external works of charity, except in so far as they are means of gaining this perfection. Hence superiors are described in the Constitutions as the spiritual fathers of their subjects. They are forbidden to overtax their virtue; they must accomodate their commands to the spiritual strength of their subjects, and make the obedience in some sense congenial to a subject, as it will be if due regard is had to his dispositions. To this it may be added, that subordinate superiors render an exact account of their government to the higher superiors.

5th. In this Institute no corporal austerities are prescribed in common, this point being left to the fervour of each one, at the discretion of the confessor or superior.

I might add many other observations no less evident, which will suggest themselves to you who know me and the Institute. In the meantime let us recommend the matter to God and to Mary, for whose honour alone we are doing what we are doing.

A. R.

XX.

TO MONSIGNOR G. B. TRENTINI AT TRENT.

He expresses his willingness to retire from the house at Trent.

Stresa,

November 15th, 1840.

A letter from you is always welcome, and your last kind letter calls for special gratitude. I am glad to hear of the good symptoms you mention. God grant the barometer may rise to "Fair!" He, in whom we have placed our confidence may well bring it about, for "the winds and the sea obey Him." We must never tire of prayer; and this is one of the ways, my dear Monsignor, in which you can assist our common cause, which is the glory of God.

I was not aware that Görres had written the two articles you speak of. Will his words incite me to vain-glory? Certainly if I rely on myself. But unless I am deceived, I think our Lord has given me in the past a sufficiently clear light to discern the vanity of human glory, and that far from taking pleasure in praise, I sincerely dislike it, it distresses me, it is a kind of cross. At the same time I know not how this may be in the future; and your loving counsels and advice are always opportune and precious, as are all proofs of true friendship. Do not fail to continue the charity of the *memento*.

As for your kind encouragement, I can assure you, dear Monsignor, that I have never been discouraged, and that what I did was done in all tranquillity, in the firm belief that I was thereby accomplishing the Divine will. I have exactly the same affection for Trent that I had in 1830, when Monsignor Luschin called me there to found a house, and

I went there in 1831 with exactly the same sentiments with which I left in 1835 : that is, in the one case and the other equally content to do *the will of God*. This alone is what I seek, what I shall seek all my life, what will, I hope, form my delight for all eternity. Men are nothing to me : I love them and desire their good : I admire the virtues I find in them, but neither their vices nor the wrongs they do me have any power to alter my dispositions in their regard. Pray then and have no doubts.

If it should please the Divine Goodness to recall the Institute to Trent, which does not appear probable at present, I should return with the same intention of doing good and the same confidence I had at first, with this difference only, that I should perhaps be more cautious in dealing with those whom I once trusted implicitly. But even my simplicity was permitted by our Lord for His high ends, and I am glad that it was so. I bless Him daily for this also as for all His other mercies.

I beg you to salute our friends in the Lord. I remain in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, your most humble and obedient servant and friend,

A. R.

XXI.

TO DON PAOLO BAROLA AT ROME.

His serenity in the midst of opposition.

Stresa,

May 25th, 1841.

My dear friend in the Lord,

Friends are known in the time of adversity. You have given me another proof of your friendship in the kind letter you have written on occasion of the storm raised against me. Let us with confidence open our hearts to the words of our Lord: "Fear not little flock." This warfare is not directed against me, properly speaking, but against the Institute of Charity, this little flock of our Lord. "Come let us oppress him craftily" is the secret cry of those who think themselves powerful and secure but are not so. Far from being dismayed by this bitter and cunning assault, I rejoice in anticipation of its distant effects. Our Lord permits this evil in order to draw some great good out of it. I thank Him with all my heart. I have read the *libel* that is being secretly distributed in so many parts of Italy. Not even one of the many accusations brought against me is true; they are simply calumnies carefully put together. When you have seen the answer I am preparing, you will see if the Psalm be not verified: "He fell into the pit he had dug." Good souls are praying for me; do you join them as you promise, and as I am sure you do already. Keep me informed, I beg, of all that is done by friends and foes.

I place my trust, after God, in our amiable Mother and Leader, Mary, and as you advise, I commend this business also to her and remain at peace. The whole Institute is

her child : let us leave her to act a mother's part. In the meantime I can assure you that she daily bestows fresh graces and new consolations upon me. But enough. I write in haste because I wish to finish my little work. Present my salutations to His Eminence Cardinal Pacca and to my friend Cardinal Castracane, who I hope will help me in time of need.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

A.R.

XXII.

TO DON PAOLO BERTOLOZZI AT LUCCA.

His confidence in the decision of the Holy See.

Stresa,

August 24th, 1841.

Dear friend, do not take it amiss if I have delayed answering your kind letter ! You must know that the time you spend in writing to me is not thrown away, because your letters are always a great pleasure to me. You must attribute my long delay to my numerous occupations, my weakness, and my firm persuasion that even when I fail to write, my friends know how I always answer them in my heart. So do not cease to write to me, but lay in a store of indulgence, for I greatly need it, and I know that you and my other true friends will not deny it to me.

Your first letter gives me to understand that you have read my *Treatise on Conscience* and other works of mine, and that you have been favourably impressed. Thanks be to God for whom I wrote ! May He be blessed, for it is only by His mercy that I have not sown error ! What could I expect of myself but mistakes and blunders ? If, persuaded as I am of this, I have dared to print so many books, is it not because I trust that the God whom I con-

stantly invoke will assist and guide me? I cherish a sweet assurance that in His mercy He has done so. "This my hope is laid up in my bosom."

As for your second letter, which I have not with me as I am away from home, I may tell you that I neither fear, nor have reason to fear anything from the Holy See. If you hear anything to the contrary, do not believe it. My *Reply* will reach you immediately, if it has not already done so. I shall be obliged if you will give a copy to Signor Paganini, who wrote me a very kind letter for which I beg you to thank him in my name. Good-bye for the present! Remember me at the Altar.

A. R.

XXIII.

TO DON PAOLO BAROLA AT ROME.

Of the opposition raised by his adversaries.

Stresa,

October 31st, 1841.

I have received a copy of the pamphlet against D——, a publication which is the fruit of your kind friendship and sincere love of truth. Oh! if all loved this beautiful truth, how much more love of God there would be in the world, how much less love of self! O beauty ever ancient and ever new, perennial source of life and salvation!

May we hope that my reply will do some little good? And what about my answer to Eusebio? Give me your candid opinion and the opinion of those with whom you have discussed the matter. Some expressions may appear too strong, but I think they are permissible when dealing with anonymous writers, and that they may prevent others from imitating their example. I perceive, however, that it has not had the desired effect, for another (if it really is

another) anonymous writer has appeared on the scene with the same argument about the distinction between sin and wilful fault; as usual without having understood my meaning. In the meantime let us pray for these persons whose imagination has got the better of their judgment. For my part, I pray daily for my adversaries, as my Master has commanded. I shall be glad if you will inform me of what comes to your knowledge concerning this miserable struggle, from which God will draw His greater glory.

I am most grateful to you and your sister for your kind hospitality to my Don Bernardo. An act of kindness is never lost, my dear friend; Our Lord will reward you. Continue to recommend me to our Mother Mary and to dear St. Alphonsus, whose unworthy but affectionate client I claim to be, no matter what people may say to the contrary.

A. R.

XXIV.

TO DON ANTONIO MISSIAGLIA AT VERONA.

On the importance of the choice of a state of life.

Stresa,

December 11th, 1841.

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your letter was most welcome, because it brought me news of you, and your pious and affectionate sentiments. I am extremely grateful for the prayers you have offered and are offering for me during this Feast and octave of our dear Immaculate Mother. Pray that she may convert me to her and her Divine Son. As for the petty persecutions you speak of they can do no harm, but good and much good; indeed they have already begun to do so.

I pray, and we all pray for you, who are deliberating

on so important a matter as the choice of a state of life, and I feel sure that you will be consoled by the knowledge and full accomplishment of the will of God. This is our only desire, the end of all we do or will, our only good and sweet comfort; for in truth there is neither good nor consolation apart from this holy will. One thing we know for certain, namely, that the Divine will desires our sanctification and perfection; for being essentially holy its proper and complete object is also the sanctification of mankind. Hence if we seek what is most holy and perfect, with that generosity of soul which trusts in God alone, we are certain to follow the most exalted and perfect will of our Creator, and in so doing we cannot err.

A. R.

• XXV.

TO GIANBATTISTA PACCANARI AT TRENT.

On the preparation to be made whilst waiting to enter religion.

Stresa,

December 11th, 1841.

I am glad you wrote to me. I enclose the form you ask for. For the rest, be of good courage! It was only natural that the tree should not fall at the first stroke. It is not by the very first prayer we offer that we shall obtain the grace which God grants only to faith, to perseverance, to fervent and untiring desires. Think of the Saints, especially St. Aloysius. One of the best means of obtaining the desired consent is never to give any sign of wavering, but to show yourself determined and resolute at all costs and to ask again and again, manifesting to your parents your motives and your affection, but especially the grave responsibility they incur before God if they resist the Divine will and the

Divine call. Make them understand that you are free to take this step and have no need of their consent, but that you ask for it in token of your respect and filial affection. Tell them they cannot doubt that their son, though he be far away, will love them most tenderly and will be grateful to them for the favour they have granted him. Nay, they will find him more attached to them and more docile, because in virtue of their consent he owes to them his salvation and happiness. But first and foremost comes prayer: this is the most efficacious means you can adopt. Place the whole affair in the hands of Our Lady, be devout to her beyond measure and you will see how this good Mother will protect her client. In short, have no doubts, only make use of all the means suitable for your purpose, with lively confidence and unshaken constancy.

1st. With regard to the rules of life which you desire, you must resolve, in the first place, to shape your whole conduct in accordance with the teaching of the little book "*Maxims of Perfection*," which contains much solid instruction.

2nd. Resolve to be faithful to your daily meditation, examination of conscience and spiritual reading. Read also the lives of the Saints, especially those of St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus, Ven. Berchmans and St. Ignatius.

3rd. Try to recite your vocal prayers as well as you possibly can, that is with understanding and devotion; say with your heart all that you pronounce with your lips.

4th. Resolve to keep yourself as much as possible in retirement and silence, abiding in the Divine Presence with interior recollection and conversing continually with God, Our Lady, the Angels and the Saints.

5th. In all things purify your intention, directing it to the greater glory of God, which consists in your greater sanctification and perfection. How much we gain by acting with a pure intention, never seeking what is human but always God, God alone, God in all things! How easily then shall we become saints!

Lastly, try to fulfil thoroughly all the duties of your state and *waste no time*: devote it all to prayer, study, and good works.

Such are the simple rules I give you. If you keep them you will be one of us before long: yes, I hope so.

Pray for me,

A. R.

XXVI.

TO DON PAOLO BERTOLOZZI CANON OF LUCCA.

Of the various classes of persons who may enter the Institute of Charity.

Stresa,

January 3rd, 1842.

My dear friend,

The Institute of Charity has two principal classes of members: the *Religious* and the *Ascribed*.

The *Religious* consecrate themselves wholly to God by the three vows, and some who are chosen by Superiors, make the fourth vow in the hands of the Sovereign Pontiff. These Religious depend entirely and for everything upon obedience under Superiors, and they profess themselves willing to exercise any branch of charity assigned to them.

The *Ascribed*, as such, are under no obligation of conscience; they form a society of Christian friends, who desire to assist their neighbour in all works of charity and come to the aid of their religious brethren. They meet occasionally under a religious Prefect, or failing this a Vice-Prefect, in order to consult together on the best means of doing good to their neighbour.

If amongst the *Ascribed* there be any who would like to join together in some way for a good work, they apply to

the General who will give them special rules if he thinks the undertaking piously and prudently conceived. These then form a *Sodality* of ascribed members. The Sodality which it would be most desirable to initiate, where it can be done, is that of the Oratory; because it would be useful for the Society to have an Oratory, where certain services may be held, with a suitable house or at least a room in which they may assemble.

From this you will see how many advantages are gained by this pious union of universal charity. For the rest, I repeat once more that the ascribed member has no obligation of conscience. He does what his fervour dictates, promotes in so far as he is able the good works spontaneously suggested to him by his friends; and is free to leave the Society if he pleases, provided he gives notice in writing to the Prefect or Superior of the Institute. Read the "*Maxims of Perfection*" in the volume of my works entitled *Ascetical*: the principles are there developed.

Your affectionate friend who desires your happiness,
A. R.

XXVII.

TO CARDINAL CASTRACANE AT ROME.

He thanks the Cardinal for informing him of the favourable attitude of the Pope towards himself and his doctrine.

Stresa,

February 7th, 1842.

The esteemed letter of Your Eminence, coming as it did when my mind was troubled in no slight degree, calls for my deepest gratitude. I am especially consoled by the last passage in which you assure me that *the Holy Father has not altered his opinion about me in the slightest, in spite of all that is said to the contrary, and that he knows my doctrine to be perfectly free from the blemishes attributed to it.* Not that I doubted the paternal charity of the Holy Father, of whose benignant sympathy I have had so many proofs in the past; but I thought our Lord might intend to subject the new Institute to one of those hard, albeit passing trials whereby He is wont to try the faith of His servants. Indeed, I had some cause to fear this, seeing how many letters and communications from high dignitaries even at Rome, described the Holy Father as being displeased with me, and that with such circumstantial details as seemed undeniable. They did not omit to say that the Holy Father's displeasure was directed against me personally, not against the Institute of Charity. This was even more prejudicial because it dispelled the notion, entertained by our well-wishers, that these rumours sprang from a jealous *esprit de corps*, on the part of certain persons.

It is difficult to calculate the injury done by a rumour purporting to emanate from such high authority and spread abroad so persistently. I experience the effects daily, and

to mention one instance, my companions in the Midlands in England attribute to this rumour the failure of their projected Novitiate. The gentleman who had promised the land has suddenly withdrawn his word, and another gentleman who had offered £3,000 for the building has done the same; so that the means of making an important foundation, has suddenly failed. May God be blessed and praised if these rumours are untrue, and if the Holy Father recognises the injustice done to me by these slurs cast on my doctrine, which being untrue could have done no harm either to me or the Institute, had the authority of the Holy Father not been abused, and the Holy See itself to some extent compromised.

But if it is sufficient for me to know the true opinion of the Holy Father, this is not sufficient, your Eminence, to repair the mischief devised against the Institute, not so much by writings, which are easily refuted, as by the false reports we have been speaking of. It is not sufficient to reassure persons in authority, ecclesiastical no less than secular, who are made to believe that I have lost the Pope's favour and am become an object of suspicion to the Holy See. The Holy Father might remedy this great evil entirely, if he would condescend to give some public expression of those paternal sentiments of which you give me the consoling intimation. His Holiness would thereby confer a great benefit on our humble Institute, and complete the work begun by him in granting to us the Pontifical approbation.

This is the great want of the Institute at the present moment; I trust your Eminence will consider the case before God and help and direct us in these straits also. We can only recommend the matter to God and to Mary our hope. I am your Eminence's most humble and obliged servant,

A. R.

XXVIII.

TO DON PAOLO BAROLA AT ROME.

He describes the activity displayed by his adversaries and begs the assistance of prayer.

Stresa,

May 9th, 1842.

What a pleasure your letters are ! They are a proof to me of the kindness of your heart, and I feel assured that the friendship we have cemented in the Lord will be in Him undying. I am most grateful for what you have done on my behalf, and, as I trust, in the cause of Truth and Religion.

You recall grateful memories and kindly associations when you mention Cardinal Ostini ; I am under great obligations to him. Large-minded, learned and singularly frank, he would be well qualified to decide the controverted points and defend the truth which is so deplorably assailed. I would write to him myself, but I fear to take up his valuable time ; besides which I feel sure that if, as you say, he has already begun to read what has appeared, he will be interested in the cause of truth and of an ill-treated priest whom he once honoured with the title of friend. I say an ill-treated priest, because his adversaries are not content simply to travesty his doctrine in print, but must needs disseminate barefaced falsehoods throughout Italy and abroad also, by means of private letters and confidential communications. Amongst these I may number the report that is at present producing consternation among my well-wishers at Verona, to the effect that my *Treatise on Conscience* has been condemned. Nor is this all : it is said that "Rome wishes the news to come out little by little in order that it may not cause a sensation, and so it is to

pass from mouth to mouth in confidence!" How despicable it all is! And the source of these announcements is always the same: a source you know well. For the rest, my dear Don Paolo, let Cardinal Ostini be conversant with the whole affair; have the kindness also to present him my respects. Write to me often and keep me informed of what is going on; but above all recommend me to our Lord and to the Blessed Virgin, whose maternal protection I daily experience, though I correspond but little to her benignity.

A. R.

XXIX.

TO DON ANTONIO SPORER PROFESSOR AT MUNICH.

On the importance of a sound Philosophy, especially in Germany.

Stresa,

July 31st, 1842.

Your letter of the 20th inst. was a welcome token of your friendship and kind memory of me. I had heard of you from friends here and from your cousins at Rovereto, but I am far more pleased with news from yourself. I shall be delighted to hear you are in possession of the Chair that you have been led to expect at Ratisbon; and still more when you pass to the Chair of Philosophy to which you aspire. I am more deeply persuaded each day that more good can be done for the cause of Religion in a Chair of Philosophy than in any other, even in that of Theology: and this especially in Germany. If sound principles were once grasped by German philosophers, the march of the human intellect would then be assured: it could not recede.

The information you give me concerning myself is a

true proof of friendship, and I beg you will keep me informed of what comes to your knowledge. I hear from Rome that our adversaries are dismayed and beginning to repent of having engaged in the conflict, but they are indefatigable in spreading secret calumnies and vague threats, so as to intimidate those who are in our favour. How deluded they are in trusting to such devious paths! We shall always place our trust in God, never in the power of men; we shall confide in the truth and in charity, for God is light and love. The Holy Father continues to give me proofs of his favour and benevolence, and to reprove what is done by our adversaries. You may be sure that God will draw nothing but good from these assaults, as has already been proved in many ways.

A. R.

XXX.

TO THE ABBÉ HENRI DE BONNECHOSE.

On the happiness to be found in accomplishing the Divine Will.

Stresa,

August 16th, 1842.

I have missed your society since your departure from Stresa. One grows accustomed to anything that is pleasant, and I had become so accustomed to your amiable and pious conversation even in this short time, that I can assure you I feel the loss of it very much. Entire agreement on religious matters is both sweet and comforting, especially after what our Lord has said: "if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven." I do not fail to make the same petition as yourself: *give what Thou commandest and command what Thou wilt.* O sweet will

of our Lord wherein consists our beatitude ! This will is so high, so far removed in wisdom and goodness from our sight and feeling, that we can neither reach it by subtlety of intellect nor accomplish it by strength of will. Nothing indeed remains for us but to humble ourselves in the dust and beg our Lord to manifest His will to us, to vivify us by His life, and to accomplish in us His good pleasure, infusing into us His efficacy. For this we must become in truth "little ones" as our Master taught, so that we may enter the kingdom of heaven, which is the reign of the humble who have no will of their own, whose will is that of God. Then in our nothingness we may hope against hope, for the greatness of God is made manifest in those who are nothing, and His will is accomplished in those who have lost their own will, and who only desire the accomplishment of the same will of God. I certainly find myself endowed with greater confidence when I feel most feeble in body and soul, for I perceive that God has greater scope at such times for the magnificence of His charity. And it appears to me, that it is just when we are and feel ourselves most feeble, that we should ask for still *greater things*, for the Lord is infinite and our misery can never place limits to His goodness but rather tend to increase His glory.

We may be sure, my dear friend, that if we only continue to say, *Thy will be done*, if we desire our Lord to dispose of us without reserve, and let no consideration move us but that of *our own greater moral perfection*, then will the Divine will be accomplished in us, in a way greater than we can conceive or hope for. Sanctity, *the desire of sanctity* : God will accomplish the rest. His law has a hidden virtue ; in its simplicity it is infinitely fruitful. Divine Providence directs all things to the good of those who delight in the law of God, and place all their hope in it, not in their own designs. Sanctity, to which all things are but as means to an end, is the only solid hope of the Church. Man's part consists in trying to correct himself and to obtain justice and sanctity:

God does the rest. He chooses those whom He deigns to employ in the service of the Church: He sends them, directs them, assists them. Happy are they who do not go of themselves, but are sent by Him! Everything depends on laying due stress on our own perfection, and finding therein the source of our confidence.

A. R.

XXXI.

TO PADRE GIANFRANCESCO, O.S.F.C., AT LOCARNO.

On confidence in the Divine Goodness: on temptations against the Faith.

Stresa,

July 31st, 1843.

I have made the *Memento* you asked for in the Holy Sacrifice, praying our Lord to sanctify and perfect you ever more in His charity. I beg you will do me the like favour, in order that our Lord may convert and put me on the right path, in spite of my constant opposition to His mercy. He is infinitely good and patient, so I do not lose heart, though if I considered only my own weakness I should despair. And if I entertain such great hopes, when I am so unfaithful to grace (it is truth which compels me to say this), how much more must you hope who have always lived out of the world, for God and to God? It seems to me, however, that we cannot gauge or measure our hope. As it is grounded on the goodness of God, which is infinite, so must it be likewise without limit, whether we be bad or good. If there be any difference it is the wicked who should hope most, for the poor man has more to hope for from a generous patron than a rich man has, and our Lord is most glorified in His liberality

towards the wicked. So I would fain *hope* more than you, having a better title in my need. I know well that your humility will not allow me this title to preference, though a just one, so we will adjust matters by proposing both of us to place no limits to our hope. We will both hope as much as we are able, as though emulating the "better gifts." Do you accept the proposal? Will you enter the lists with me? I think you will, and so generously that you will help me by your prayers to hope much, without ever being able to surpass you.

As for what you say in your esteemed letter concerning temptations against the Faith, pay no attention to them. They are not real temptations. Your faith is immovable and secure in the depths of your soul: it was infused in Baptism and has been fortified by other Sacraments. This does not prevent these fears and a certain trepidation from arising on the surface of the soul, as also doubts that are not real but apparent: things that God allows as trials to the souls most dear to Him, so that they may be more active and vigilant in His love and may purify themselves by means of tribulation. I do not consider them in the least dangerous or to be made account of. On the contrary, the more you despise them and treat them as movements of the imagination and sensitive nature (as they really are), the more easily they disappear of their own accord or become weakened. If you take these things seriously, and give them an importance they do not possess, it is easy to become disturbed and fearful: and fear and sadness have the effect of a lens that enlarges a fly till it appears an elephant. Nay they do more, for a soul filled with vain fear sees what does not exist. Away with fear, trepidation, excessive reflection on these points, and too minute examination of conscience! What we want is a *holy liberty of spirit*, cheerful thoughts, reflections on the goodness of God or the Paradise that is awaiting us, moderate recreation and physical relaxation, together with a complete abandonment of self into the arms of the Divine clemency, and con-

fidential intercourse with the sweet Mother of hope, Mary most holy. Let us have no doubts, dear Father! Render thanks to God for everything: He is with you and is leading you by a safe path to His eternal embraces. Remember in your prayers him who has the temerity to write in this strain, when he has so much greater reason to be taught by you. But it was your own desire, so you have changed into obedience what would have been temerity on my part. Asking your blessing,

I remain

your humble and devoted servant,

A. R.

XXXII.

TO FATHER GIOVANNI SALLIER AT THE CARTHUSIAN
MONASTERY AT COLLEGNO.

He begs the assistance of his prayers.

Stresa,

November 28th, 1843.

Your dear letter, Reverend Father in Jesus Christ, has both consoled and humbled me. It consoled me, because the charity of God's servants diffuses itself like sweet-smelling balsam on friends and strangers, bringing ineffable consolation to souls, especially if they be jaded and oppressed; and your letter is full of this sweet charity. Your letter has also humbled me, because you speak of the work of God, which I do but frustrate, my dear Father, by my demerits and daily imperfections. Ah! I am speaking the truth, I confide it to you as to a brother, unknown to me indeed personally, but well known by what I discern of your spirit. I am a poor creature, compelled to sigh over myself, unable to correspond with the infinite goodness of our Lord and the patience with which He supports me:

indeed, I am only capable of offending Him, of opposing Him, of fighting against His infinite goodness and placing obstacle upon obstacle to the immense designs of Divine mercy. I wish you to know this, because God has called you to that Order which has chosen the better part, and you only seek, as you say, to hasten the work of Divine mercy by prayer. You may help me immensely by obtaining for me the triumphant and efficacious grace of conversion, with the cessation of all my infidelity and resistance. Happy should I be, were the hour of grace to come!

My hands are full of good works entrusted to me by our Lord, and I am good for nothing, capable of spoiling everything! Indeed I do spoil the work: I sterilise it. What confusion! What distress! On the other hand my numerous occupations take me away from prayer, whereby alone I can obtain strength, courage, consolation. Do, I beg of you, take compassion on me, my dear Father, and speak to God of me and my affairs, in which the salvation of many souls is involved. It is only too true that I cannot do myself prejudice without doing harm also to many of my neighbours. I trust then to your charity. That God who has inspired you to write to me will move you to send up efficacious prayers on my behalf: He perhaps desires to attach my conversion to your prayers. Accept my dear Father the sincere sentiments of charity and devotedness with which I have the honour to be

Your unworthy servant in Jesus Christ,

A. R.

XXXIII.

TO A PRIEST N. N.

On the spirit of pride and its remedy.

Stresa,

February 3rd, 1844.

My dear Sir,

The person of whom you write must be on his guard against his own *imagination*, for the devil infuses the spirit of pride into this faculty. He must make it a rule to cut short all useless thoughts, such as those of the future. These thoughts are both frivolous and dangerous. Man should occupy himself exclusively with the present, and in particular with his present moral state, in order to ascertain and correct his faults; then alone is he safe from diabolical illusions. I would then advise the individual in question to acquire a great sorrow for and horror of his own sins. One single sin, one single offence against God is enough to make one weep a thousand years. A thousand years do I say? Nay, for ever in the flames of hell. Any one who has this understanding and horror of sin will be proof against pride, because one sin alone is sufficient to humble man below all creatures, to make him account himself a monster, the refuse of nature, an instrument fit only to be burnt. Above all, I would pray and beg him with tears to take the utmost precaution against offending holy purity in the least degree. If, by flying the occasions and using all the means suggested by the masters of the spiritual life, he succeed in purifying his life from every taint, he will obtain also from God the grace of holy humility.

In a matter of such importance, to compass an end for

which life itself must if necessary be sacrificed, I would suggest two principal means. The first is to retire from the world for ten or fifteen days at least and make the Spiritual Exercises under some experienced director. A diligent self-examination in the light of eternity will be followed by a general confession, and then the old life must be left behind and a new life begun. The second means is to choose a holy confessor, and to lay bare frequently every weakness, temptation and fault in the sacred tribunal, following the counsels received therein. It would be well to choose a priest well versed in the spiritual life both as confessor and as director for the Exercises.

Our Lord, in His goodness, has given us many other means of overcoming our pride and the illusions of our passions, and the first of these is *prayer*. Oh! how powerful a means is this to obtain all necessary light and grace if practised faithfully and lovingly! I should advise the said individual to devote himself to *prayer* rather than to *study*, and to *vocal* rather than to *mental* prayer, because mental prayer affords a certain play for the imagination, of which he must beware. Besides, vocal prayer is adapted to the simple and ignorant; and the person we are speaking of must study to become as simple and childlike as possible if he wishes to attain humility and repress the passions that are so easily aroused. I should advise him also to read suitable books, with a sincere desire of drawing profit from them. He should render himself familiar with the *Imitation*, the *Spiritual Combat*, the *Confessions* and *Meditations* of St. Augustine and the writings of St. Francis of Sales. The *Confessions* of St. Augustine, if read with proper dispositions are well adapted to move him to contrition for his sins. These spiritual works should take the preference over speculative studies which easily exalt the mind and dry up the affections of the heart, whilst they are far less important to man than the study of his eternal salvation. *Quid prodest homini?* To this must be added great vigilance over the feelings, the repression of every movement

of presumption and pride, whilst care must be taken to acquire diffidence, humility, self-contempt and a sincere appreciation of this truth :—that man of himself is capable of nothing but evil, and should be willing to rank below all his fellow-creatures.

You ask whether the person we are speaking of should make external acts of humility. I reply that such acts, performed with sincerity, are most useful to the man who wishes to conquer pride, and have been made by all the Saints. But they must come from the heart, they must be a sincere expression of our interior feelings, or at least of those sentiments we wish to acquire. Let him finally lay in a store from among the many reasons which demonstrate how just and reasonable is humility, and how a man can never lower and humble himself too much after the example of Jesus Christ, who descended from Heaven to the most painful and ignominious cross; of those reasons, again, that show how unjust, impious, injurious is every species of pride to the dust and clay of which we were made, and how repulsive an object man becomes to God when under the influence of pride.

To humility it would be well to unite the exercise of that charity which desires to do all possible good to our neighbour, and makes a man forget himself for the sake of others. The humblest offices of charity, such as teaching catechism to children and uneducated persons patiently and lovingly, is very helpful. But above all, *confidence* in God and in Mary, equalled only by diffidence in self.

A. R.

XXXIV.

TO DON DIONIGI SEMENZA AT VIENNA.

A brief explanation of the Institute of Charity.

Stresa,

February 12th, 1844.

The Institute of Charity is a religious society very different, I daresay, from what you imagine. It is not concerned with the promotion of Philosophy, being religious and charitable in its scope. The members of the Institute are true religious, bound by three essential vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which vows are perpetual though simple in form. These vows are offered to God with a view to acquiring evangelical perfection; for it is this perfection that forms the exclusive aim of the Brothers of Charity. For this perfection—as for the pearl of great price—they are prepared to sell all, to renounce all things, even the study of Philosophy itself. The statutes of such an Institute are naturally simple in proportion to the unity of its end, and they can easily be conceived by one acquainted with the nature of evangelical perfection. I will give you the idea in a few words.

Evangelical perfection consists in charity towards God and our neighbour. Hence the statutes are all directed to enabling the members of the Institute to pursue and practise, in the most comprehensive manner possible, charity towards God and our neighbour, dying, so to speak, to every other thought and affection. It is true that many works enter into the exercise of charity: education, the promotion of schools and colleges, the cultivation of the Sciences, especially of Philosophy which forms in these days an important factor in the good of religion

and humanity. These, however, are not exclusive means, but are subordinate to the great end. Every holy work, every charitable undertaking, no matter how humble, laborious or repulsive, is assumed by the Institute when it appears consistent with the will of God and perfection. The decision rests naturally with the Superiors who govern the Society. It follows necessarily that the most perfect obedience is expected, it being enacted that all should apply with indifference to whatever work is deemed by Superiors most conducive to the glory of God. Perfect obedience brings in its train that spirit of abnegation and sacrifice, by which a man is prepared to leave the work dearest to his heart for the love of God. No austere practices are prescribed by rule, but the continual dependence and continual abnegation, together with the labour and fatigue incidental to the exercise of charity, are no light burden to human nature. This is the substance of the statutes, which have not been modified since their approbation by the Holy See.

I have now complied with your request. If God should call you to this manner of life, I shall be pleased to receive you. I have the honour to be your most humble servant in Christ,

A. R.

XXXV.

TO DON ANTONIO BOTTARI, AT RACCONIGI.

On the education of youth: safeguards against infidelity.

Stresa,

April 22nd, 1844.

I must begin by apologizing for my delay in answering your kind letter of the 11th inst.

You are wise in attributing the vacillation of so many young men in faith and morals to the imperfections of our system of education, especially among youths destined for the army. The evil will become irreparable, unless the cause be removed by reforming education itself, and you would certainly be well-advised in bringing the matter before his Majesty, our pious sovereign. In the meantime, until such a desirable change can be effected, it would be well to apply some remedy to existing evils, by strengthening the minds of these youths and by inculcating sound principles during the prescribed course of instruction. Among the manuals in use is the *Catechism*. Well, let the subject be exhaustively treated, both showing forth religion in all its fulness and refuting the *calumnies* of heretics and the impious. This mode of apologetics when well conducted, is likely to prove useful as being unanswerable. It is simply a question of ascertaining whether the Catholic Church and her doctrines are such as heretics and the impious declare them to be; and the refutation of the objections brought against the religion they profess, is calculated to make the young penetrate and appreciate its beauty the more.

On the other hand, I do not deem it advisable to enter into objections of a different nature, that require subtle

reasoning and a knowledge of the world not possessed by school boys. Those who have difficulties on these points should be treated apart with great care and gentleness. There is no reason, however, why the first principles of logic should not be applied in giving religious instruction, especially when treating of the defence of the Faith. This will in some degree supply the deficiency of a Philosophy Class. And as these principles of *religious logic*, if I may so style it, tend to form the minds of the boys, so will their hearts be formed by moral arguments proving religion to be not only true, but beautiful and natural, useful even in what appertains to this life. History, for instance, whether of Greece, Rome or our own country, should be treated in such a way as to harmonise with and confirm the religious instruction. The teacher of History will be careful to contrast the vices and misery of pagan society with the virtue and humanity of Christian society; then he will lay down the true measure by which great men must be judged; he will show how much vanity is concealed beneath their display of virtue, how deplorable an illusion is human greatness and how unworthy of the ambition of a truly great and virtuous man. The study of literature and the sciences is adapted to form a sound mind and inspire the heart with love of religion, when directed to show the heinousness of vice and the beauty of virtue.

All this paves the way and disposes the soul to receive the salutary impression of the Eternal Truths, notably, as you remark, that of the terrible judgments of God and hell. To make these impressions indelible, care should be taken in choosing good confessors and experienced directors to give the Spiritual Exercises. Facts and examples exert great power over the young; and as you ask me for the name of some author containing these I may mention the Abbé Carron's works. He has also a collection, I think, of the lives of good Christian soldiers.

In your esteemed letter you ask me for some hints on the best method of educating the large number of youths confided to your care by Providence. Although

the limits of a letter do not insure my saying the one thing in a thousand that is necessary, this much I will say in order to obey you. It seems to me, that the best method is to unite gentleness with firmness and *great reasonableness*, so that a boy may always be convinced, in his heart, that his master is right and he himself in the wrong. This is difficult, for it requires great prudence and consistency of conduct.

I take the liberty of sending you a little work of mine which a friend has had printed.

I remain, Rev Father Rector,

Your humble and devoted servant in Christ,
A. R.

XXXVI.

TO DON LUIGI POLIDORI AT MILAN.

On Our Lady's joy at the birth of her Son.

Sacro Monte di Varallo,
August 2nd, 1844.

As I have a little free time between the various occupations of my Retreat, I want to write to you about a passage that distresses me in the last number of the *Amico Cattolico*. You are a devout servant of the Mother of God, who is not only your mother, as she is the mother of us all, but almost your compatriot.* Now how could you allow the statement to pass, at least without a word of protest, that Mary on reaching Bethlehem was "overtaken by the pangs of child-birth." Is not such an expression painful to you! Could anything, to say the least of it, be more "offensive to pious ears?" Our Lady suffering when she gave birth to the Saviour! The Virgin Mother of God subject to the penalty and misery of other mothers! Pray, where

* Don Luigi was a native of Loreto.

do you find applied to Mary the law imposed on sinful Eve: "in sorrow thou shalt bear children?" Do you not notice that this law begins thus: "I will multiply thy sorrows in thy conceptions," and is therefore allied to the cause which multiplies the conceptions of other women? This could not apply to her who had no other spouse than God, no espousals that were not spiritual, and no other son than the Only-Begotten Son of God, without detriment to her virginity. Does not the law proceed: "Thou shalt be under the power of thy husband, and he shall rule over thee," words that indicate the cause of the multiplied conceptions of other women? Now, did any man rule over Mary? Joseph was legally her spouse, but we cannot doubt that he revered her as his Lady and did not regard her as subject to him. To whom then was Mary subject but to Him of whom she declared herself the handmaid: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord?" Wherefore if Joseph held on earth the dignity, so to speak, of the head of the house he did so only as representing the Divine Spouse, to whom he had fully yielded and consecrated his spouse.

Far from supposing that Mary suffered in giving the Sun of Justice to the world, I hold (as do you also I am sure in company with all her devout clients) that when the time of the Redeemer's birth was accomplished, she must have been filled with ineffable delight and surprised by an ecstasy of love that was a foretaste of heavenly bliss. No, dear friend, it is not right to tolerate this expression, which is, I am sure, merely a slip of the pen on the part of an illustrious writer, but is in itself an outrage on our Christian feelings. It must not be allowed to pass uncorrected, and I beg you, by the love you bear to Mary, to have it corrected for the benefit of ordinary readers.

For my part, I perceive that Holy Scripture not only makes use of such expressions as dissociate any thought of weakness from Mary's motherhood, but we see from the sacred writings that she became a mother without the co-operation of man, and that as soon as she had given birth to her Divine Child, she with her

own hands wrapped Him in the swaddling clothes and laid Him in the manger, as a person in good health would do. "She brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in a manger." She would do everything herself. Who can doubt that Joseph would have helped her, had she needed his aid in ministering to the Divine Babe? And yet see how good St. Joseph remains in a corner of the cave in silent adoration and contemplation, without venturing to advance and offer his assistance to his dear Queen, whilst she yields to none, shares with none the maternal solicitude, to which she, as Jesus' only parent on earth, has exclusive right. I will give you another instance, one of many that might be cited, of the guarded expressions used in Holy Scripture, all to Mary's honour. Look at that passage in Exodus (ch. xiii) where it is enacted that the first born should be set apart for sacrifice and then ransomed. What do you say to the phrase: "sanctify unto me every first-born that openeth the womb?" Why does not the law say simply "every first-born" without any corollary? You will say perhaps that the addition of explanatory words is characteristic of Oriental languages. But since these same Oriental languages were fashioned and chosen by Divine Providence to give expression to the oracles of Divine Revelation, I do not hesitate to say that the Hebrew phrase was not used by chance. No, it was chosen by God as the fittest to express His meaning: it was intended to limit the force of that law so that while it applied to all ordinary mothers, it excepted Mary the Mother of God. Could any expression be more suitable to the intention of the Divine Legislator? There is no need of adding any special exemption; the exception is already contained in the very letter of the law, with truly legal conciseness. You may find the same circumspection in the passage in Leviticus setting forth the law of purification. All the phrases employed show that the law was made for ordinary mothers, not for her who became a mother without ceasing to be a virgin. Not pain, therefore, but

unspeakable joy accompanied the child-birth of that Virgin, who remained always “a garden enclosed—a fountain sealed up.” These words, recorded in Holy Scripture to the honour of the pure Spouse of the King of the heavenly Jerusalem, are applied by the Church to Mary, to her through whom the Incarnate Word passed as the sun’s ray through purest crystal, even as He emerged from the sepulchre without breaking the seals upon it, and entered the room where the Apostles were assembled “the doors being shut.”

I hope, nay I am sure that the illustrious and devout writer of the article, in which this offensive phrase has inadvertently been employed, will not be displeased at these remarks of mine or at my desire to see it corrected. The article in question—to say nothing of its merits of style and erudition—is full of love for Mary; and I believe that the writer himself will be well-pleased to learn a doctrine which may perhaps be new to him, and redounds so much to the glory of that Queen whom he portrays in the glowing colours of eloquence and devotion. The fact, too, that he is a layman fully excuses a mistake that might have been made inadvertently even by us priests. If you do not care to write a notice yourself for the paper in question, I have no objection to your asking the Editor to publish my letter in the next number.

A. R.

XXXVII.

TO DON PAOLO BAROLA AT ROME.

He draws lessons of patience from the feast of Christmas.

Stresa,
December 25th, 1844.

My dear Don Paolo,

May the most amiable Jesus, whose infant tears are so sweet and lovable, infuse His healing balm into your heart ! I was deeply grieved to hear you are suffering. Would that I could cure and comfort you, my dear friend and brother in the Lord ! As I cannot do this, and am indeed but imperfectly acquainted with the nature of your trials, to which you allude obscurely, I shall have recourse to the new-born Physician of our souls. He knows every fibre of our being and is ready to cure us effectually and lovingly, if we do but apply the remedy prescribed : prayer, constant exertion and boundless confidence. Courage then ! Let us approach His crib, let us offer ourselves wholly to Him, let us adore Him and beg for His grace, and with that grace all other things will come to us. "Now all good things came to me through her and innumerable riches through her hands. And I rejoiced in all these ; for this wisdom went before me and I knew not that she was the mother of them all." See how poor the Divine Infant is ! How He shivers with cold ! And yet men refuse to acknowledge Him ! Who would not yearn to make Him a return of love and gladly share this poverty and oblivion ? What are our sufferings when compared with those of the Child Jesus ? What are we, and what is He ? We may learn this from the lips of His holy and gentle Mother, who is so happy now at

finding herself with Him in the stable, that is not dark since the light of souls is there, nor cold for the fire of charity is ablaze. The Virgin Mother will speak to our hearts if we draw near to hers, she will make us realize it all and share her feelings. My dear friend, we must not lose heart: no, for nothing happens to us except by the disposition of this loving Babe, and He disposes of everything through love. He can only act through love, and when His loving-kindness does not appear it is only through greater love, a love so great that our intellect cannot always fathom it. This thought is often so full of comfort as to make what is bitter, sweet: when I am most overwhelmed by trials then I seem to find the greater cause for consolation and I am able to say with the Apostle: "when I am weak then I am strong."

How pleased I should be if you could come and spend a little time with me in this peaceful solitude, where you would find, I think, hearts who know how to love. As for studies, I know your love of truth. We only love that truth which leads to charity, or rather is inseparable from charity. I have no anxiety or concern about my affairs, trusting that Providence will make everything conduce to the triumph of truth and the greater glory of God, whom alone I love, who is all my good! I embrace you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and remain your brother in Christ,

A. R.

XXXVIII.

TO THE CLERIC GIOACHINO DE TARTAROTTI AT
TRENT.

On the question of vocation to the foreign Missions.

Stresa,

May 5th, 1846.

I can hardly give you any definite advice without seeing your friend, but if he likes to come to me at Rovereto next September I will do so willingly. In the meantime I will make a few general remarks that may be useful to Signor Toresani.

In the first place the work of the foreign missions is most excellent, and it is a great grace to be called to so sublime a ministry. In the second place it is both arduous and dangerous, and requires three conditions: first that the vocation be well assured, secondly that the candidate prepare himself by holiness of life, and thirdly that all due prudence be exercised in guarding against spiritual dangers and in making the work effective.

A young ecclesiastic, called to this life, might approach it in two ways: either by offering himself to some Bishop or to Propaganda, or else by entering a religious congregation. I should not suggest the first course to anyone unless he were: first, of mature age; secondly, well exercised in all ecclesiastical virtues; thirdly, sufficiently instructed; fourthly, of robust health. And this because, without these qualities he would endanger his own soul and probably produce little fruit in the souls of others. On the other hand I would advise a young man, even without these qualities, to consecrate himself to God in religion, because he would there be *subject to obedience*, his vocation would

be tested by superiors, and he may be sure, if sent by them, that his mission is from God. Again in religion, subjects are first formed and those only are sent who are well trained and qualified. Lastly the missionaries are not sent alone and without a guide, but they are accompanied by their brethren and watched over by their superiors both as regards soul and body.

Tell your friend to *pray much* and to prepare himself by a spotless and fervent life, and God will not fail to lead him by *right paths*. If he would like to consult some one of experience at Trent, I should suggest Don Angeli. Pray both of you for me also.

A. R.

XXXIX.

TO DON PAOLO BAROLA AT ROME.

On the elevation of Pius IX to the Pontifical Throne.

Stresa,

October 26th, 1846.

I was greatly pleased to learn from your dear letter of the 12th inst. that you are completely restored to health. Do we not trace the hand of God in this? Do we not see the tenderness of that sweet Mother whom you have constantly invoked? The hand of God is manifest in the benefit He has conferred on the Church and the happy effect which the good news has had upon your health.

For my part I am filled with gratitude for the elevation of Pius IX., a subject of joy indeed to the whole world, and I do not cease to pray and obtain prayers that God may enrich him with those abundant graces that are necessary for the accomplishment of his sublime mission. Bound to him as you are by intimate and familiar ties, the common joy is your special joy also, and what better remedy could

have been devised than this heaven-sent restorative, which made you, as you say, another man? Praise then and thanksgiving to the Supreme Benefactor, and God grant the life restored so graciously be consecrated entirely to His service!

I think I must have seen Mons. Mastai Ferretti in 1829, when he was preparing to go to Chili, but I have only an imperfect recollection of him. I should like you to know, however, that since his accession to the Pontifical Throne, he has deigned to take our little Institute of Charity under his paternal protection, by a letter which he condescended to address to me in answer to my congratulations and expression of homage. As for your remark that the Institute can now be established in Rome, I can say nothing on that point. It is true that an Institute, which professes to exercise universal charity under the immediate direction of and obedience to the Head of the Church, should have its centre in Rome: but God knows the times and moments, and you remember my motto: "It is good to await in silence the salvation of God." This is the ruling principle of all my actions, and I have had the words written over the door of my cell at Monte Calvario. Gregory XVI., of dear and holy memory, promised me I should in time have a house in Rome. God did not will that it should be so during his Pontificate, so I did not wish for it either.

We liked your verses, and there was a touch of Dante in them, which was highly commended by good critics. But what shall I say of our dear Don Francesco? The grief occasioned by his loss is only relieved by knowing how well he prepared for the great journey, and what a good friend he found in you in his last hours. I have prayed and will not fail to pray and obtain suffrages for him. He was a man who seemed restless and dissatisfied with himself; it may be our Lord has called him to Himself at an opportune moment. How good and merciful He is!

O my dear Don Paolo help me and mine by your

prayers in our many needs. In how much greater need shall I be in the hour of death, which is perhaps at hand !

A. R.

XL.

TO MONS. LUQUET, BISHOP OF HESEBON, AT ROME.

How liberty of action in the Institute is reconciled with subordination to the Hierarchy. On the question of Oriental rites.

Stresa,

December 7th, 1846.

I hope I shall see Mr. Newman, whom you mention in your esteemed letter, on his return from Rome. Manzoni forwarded to me a letter of introduction from Philips, and I regret I have had no opportunity of offering him hospitality. As for what you say of the submission of us Brothers of Charity to the ecclesiastical order, that is a fundamental point in our Institute. I saw plainly that a universal Institute could not exist if it were, absolutely speaking, subject to the jurisdiction of individual Bishops, each one of whom naturally thinks first of his own diocese, and only afterwards of the general good of the Church, which is in itself most important and should be the end of such an Institute as ours. I knew that the Ordinaries could not govern it with the same maxims, the same spirit or unanimous action, and what is more, they are so involved in external business that they have no time (under existing conditions) to cultivate the religious and interior spirit of the members of such a Society, which after all is the root and foundation of their exterior work. But on the other hand, since the Bishops are the legitimate successors of the Apostles, with a mission

from Jesus Christ,—who could desire to do anything in the Church except under their direction, unless sent by them? It was, therefore, necessary in the Institute of Charity to combine this submission, obedience and religious dependence on the Hierarchy with the universality of the Institute, the independence necessary to its preservation as a compact and united body, in good internal order, animated by one spirit and removed from adverse influence.

In order to compass this double purpose, the Institute was exempted from episcopal jurisdiction, the Superiors being thus enabled to devote themselves freely to the spiritual training of their subjects. At the same time by its rule and fundamental principles, the Institute is pledged to profess a retired and hidden life, awaiting from Providence the opportunity of exercising charity, and awaiting from the Prelates of the Church the *mission* necessary for undertaking the cure of souls and the preaching of the Gospel. In the exercise of these ministries the Institute is likewise pledged to consult in every way the wishes of the Bishops, and to give the preference to their demands over other applications from whatsoever quarter. And in the event of a parish priest or bishop being a member of the Institute all difficulty would cease, for it has been established by rule that the parish priest taken from the ranks of the Society would be *ipso facto* Superior of the Institute in his parish, and the Bishop *ipso facto* Superior of the Institute in his diocese. This would always be the case under certain conditions laid down in the Constitutions. There the Institute is divided into parishes, dioceses, provinces, etc.; a division corresponding to that of the Hierarchy which it is called upon to serve.

To come to the chief topic of your esteemed letter, the question of Oriental Rites. I have no difficulty in confiding my sentiments on the matter to your prudence and friendship: my opinion is as follows. The attachment of various nations to their rites is so great and, permit me to say, so blind, that I think it would be impossible to bring the schismatical and heretical nations of the East into the

Church if a change of rites were insisted upon, and the use of the Latin or any other rite enforced; at least I believe that for such nations a change of rites would be more difficult than a change of faith. An attentive study of the case will make this apparent at once. Hence we see the wisdom of the Church and of the Holy See in recommending missionaries to respect the oriental rites; this is particularly noticeable in the Decrees of Benedict XIV. Granting this great attachment of oriental peoples to their ancient and venerable liturgies, granting the influence of public worship on religious feeling, I believe one of the most efficacious means of drawing Christians into the bosom of the Catholic Church is that of maintaining or restoring all the dignity which these rites have possibly lost in the eyes of the West, as you justly observe. I think it is a happy thought of yours to introduce the various rites among those members of the Catholic Congregations, who are destined to become Missionaries and Pastors of these stray sheep.

With regard to the Institute of Charity your question is sufficiently answered by the name it bears, the motto which characterises it: *omnibus omnia*. But in order to avoid confusion, each nation would require missionaries acquainted with its own rite. This would be quite feasible in the Institute of Charity, as its members are generally classified according to the distinctive works of charity undertaken. Hence it would be quite conformable to its institution and spirit to have a Missionary College for the Russians for instance, one for the Greeks, another for the Armenians and so on for the various schismatic Churches. It is true that the Roman rite is prescribed in our rule, but this was enacted with reference to the various rites of the Western Church (it being evident that there should be uniformity in the West), and does not apply to the oriental rites. Besides, as you say, the approval of the Holy See would have to be obtained.

We shall not fail to pray that your excellent designs

and ardent zeal for the coming of God's Kingdom may bear abundant fruit.

Asking your blessing

I remain with profound respect,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

XLI.

TO PADRE GIACOMO GOGGIA OF THE ORATORY AT
BIELLA.

*Whether a religious Superior may resign his office with
a safe conscience.*

Verona,

May 16th, 1847.

I must begin by apologising for not answering your letter immediately. It was forwarded to me at Verona at a time when I had a great pressure of business. I will now proceed to the case which you lay before me concerning a religious Superior.

In the first place, supposing that it is a question of a Community whose members are not bound by vows, I hold that he is under no obligation to remain in office or to remain in the Community, and consequently he is free in conscience. But it is one thing to ask whether "it would be a sin to renounce the office or leave the Community" and another to inquire whether "in such a course he would be following the law of perfection." If the said Superior does not seek what is *most perfect* but simply what is *lawful*, I answer that he may do what he pleases and has no need of counsel. But if he loves perfection, and wishes to do what is most pleasing to God and profitable for his soul, I answer :

1st. Let him do what his Community wishes, denying his own will and abandoning himself to God. The Community in electing him gives a sufficient proof of confidence and shows that his government, though it may be defective, is at least considered preferable to another's.

2nd. Let him estimate correctly the grace conferred by God on those Superiors who are legitimately constituted, and appreciate the *great merit* acquired by a Superior, even when defective, who sacrifices his own peace and quiet for the common good, which merit is usually greater than could be gained if he thought only of himself. God thinks for those who through motives of pure charity think only of others and forget themselves.

3rd. Let him endure, support and bear with the defects of the Community, doing what he can to maintain and increase regular observance, and remembering that if he left the government to others and observance decreased still more, he might have even greater cause for disquietude and scruple.

I recommend myself to the prayers of my esteemed Fathers and Brothers, in which I have much confidence.

Believe me your most humble and obedient servant,
A. R.

XLII.

TO PADRE GIOVANNI MARIA CAROLI AT FERRARA.

On his reluctance to accept the Cardinalate.

Rome,

November 1st, 1848.

Whilst gratefully accepting your congratulations on the great honour of the purple, which the clemency and benignity of Pius IX. wishes to impart to me, I must confess that such an event calls forth fear and sorrow rather than joy. I certainly adore in this, as in every other instance, the designs of Providence, which is wont to lead us by admirable and unforeseen paths, and this thought allays my agitation, for I know well that the Providence of our Heavenly Father is too great and beneficent to fail us in the hour of need. But when I turn my thoughts upon myself again, I am filled with dismay, for I perceive nothing on which I can place the slightest reliance. I must look to the prayers of my good friends and trust that they will obtain for me the assistance of God, and what is more my co-operation with that assistance.

A. R.

XLIII.

TO THE FATHER MASTER OF THE SACRED PALACE.

He signifies his perfect submission to the prohibition of two of his works by the Congregation of the Index.

Albano,

August 15th, 1849.

Very Reverend Father,

I have this moment received from the hands of the Rev. P. Boeri your esteemed note, dated Viterbo the 12th inst. in which you inform me that the Sacred Congregation of the Index, of which His Eminence Cardinal Brignoli is President, having assembled at Naples by express command of His Holiness, it was unanimously agreed (the decision being afterwards approved by the Holy Father), that two of my works should be prohibited, viz., *The Five Wounds of the Church*, and *The Constitution according to social justice*, etc. At the same time you inquire as to my submission to the said decree, so that mention may be made of it in the decree itself.

With the sentiments of a most devoted and obedient son of Holy Church, which I have always been at heart and also publicly professed myself to be, I declare my submission to the prohibition of the said works purely, simply and in every best way possible, begging you to make this known to our Holy Father and the Sacred Congregation.

I take this opportunity of expressing my profound respect, and I have the honour to remain

Your humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

XLIV.

TO DON EDOARDO BIANCHINI AT PINEROLO.

On the best method of training Clerical Students.

Stresa,

December 7th, 1849.

The office in the Seminary which has been entrusted to you is most important, and it will certainly prove meritorious. You ask for some advice concerning discipline and the requisite scientific training, and I will obey to the best of my ability.

The most important feature of discipline is that of making everything subservient to the spiritual formation of the young alumni of the sanctuary. This point must be adhered to with no less rigour than gentleness, for solid piety is of far more consequence to Ecclesiastics than learning itself. Every care must be taken to purify their motives, so that in entering the ecclesiastical state they may seek God alone as their portion and inheritance. In the case of those actuated by ulterior motives, it is necessary I think to raise their standard by instruction and exhortation and failing this, to dismiss them in peace. As it is we have too many bad or imperfect ecclesiastics; good ones are rare, and still more rare are the perfect, perfect I mean as far as human frailty permits. The director should be well provided with books that treat of the dignity of the ecclesiastical state, the sanctity required and the grave duties imposed by it, and the signs of a vocation, the chief of which is this very rectitude of intention. These books should be kept always at hand, so that he may be able to cite them frequently, accompanied by appropriate maxims drawn from the Scriptures and

the Fathers. To these should be added a simple treatise on Ascetics, of which you will find an outline in the *Maxims of Perfection*. The method of meditation and examination of conscience is also explained in this little work, and, though the method may be simplified, no pains should be spared to make every cleric familiar with both these exercises.

It is far more difficult to offer you any advice on the question of scientific training. The course of studies pursued in Seminaries seems to me far removed from what it should be. I believe that theology requires a foundation of philosophy, but sound philosophy. As for the study of theology itself it should be based on the magisterium of the Catholic Church, and I should like to see it initiated by a simple but learned exposition of all that the Catholic Church actually believes or has defined. When the students have acquired a clear, distinct and orderly notion of all that the Church has defined as dogma, together with those doctrines which are not yet defined, then these doctrines may be considered with reference to a three-fold object; that is, to satisfy the minds of Catholics, to demonstrate religion to unbelievers, and finally to confute the errors of heretics, idolators, Mahometans or any kind of superstitions; and then the treatise "*De locis theologicis*" may be opened and each part treated as a separate science, though not without reference to the whole. Reason, Scripture and Tradition should produce three different branches of theology; the first is directed to refute the objections against Catholic doctrine derived from pure reason, the second, the study of the Sacred Scriptures, to correct those heretics who admit the inspiration of Scripture. The third, which comprises the study of the Councils, of the greater part of Church History, the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers as well as all the documents of Tradition, is calculated to show how uniform has been the teaching of the Church in all ages, whilst the doctrine of Christ is even now constantly developed and receives ever fresh application and illustration. Moral

Theology should be treated as a continuation, a complement, a higher form of natural Ethics. In the same way, Canon Law should be based on the Natural Law. The discipline and liturgy of the Church might be treated as separate branches. And the whole course should conclude with Pastoral Theology, that is, the science of the Pastors, so useful in forming good parish priests and later on good Bishops.

You will gather from the little I have said in obedience to your wish how much remains to be done in the matter of theological training. Remember in your prayers your humble servant in Christ,

A. R.

XLV.

TO MONSIGNOR BERTOLOZZI, BISHOP OF MONTALCINO, IN TUSCANY.

He congratulates him on his promotion to the Episcopate and touches briefly on the duties of the position.

Stresa,

February 11th, 1850.

I was disappointed at being unable to spend another day at Massarosa, where you had kindly invited me, that we might come to know each other personally, as we had long wished. But I had already encountered several delays, and was obliged to hasten on to join the Brothers who were expecting me in Piedmont. Here I had the consolation of seeing in the newspapers that your merit and generosity in fighting for the liberty of Holy Church have been requited by the distinction of the bishopric of Montalcino. Thus placed on the candlestick you will be able to spread abroad the light of the Lord. I congratulate you, or rather I congratulate the Holy Church on your elevation; not you so much, I say, because the episcopal mantle placed on your shoulders is always a

formidable burden to the very Angels, especially in these days of infidelity and deception.

Poor Church ! Who will give tears to my eyes to deplore her sufferings and those that threaten her ? Who will enable me to weep over the lamentable weakness of those who should defend her against the cunning and hypocrisy of her foes ? Placed on the tower of Israel, you will now be able to watch the struggle and discuss more plainly the dangers to which the hosts of the Lord are exposed, and as one of the Captains, you will encourage the combatants, and speed hither and thither with the needful succour. I do not doubt that, called as you are to episcopal perfection, you will know even how to die, were it necessary, for the glory of the Lord and the safety of your flock. If I congratulate you then, it is not on the temporal grandeur of your position, its riches or emoluments, but because you are called to win an imperishable palm on the battle field where the combat is being fought out between the sons of God and those of men.

You will have heard of the prohibition of my two works. I add nothing on this point, for I need only acquaint you with my complete submission to the decree of legitimate authority. For the rest, in the midst of my grief at so unexpected an event, our Lord bestows a tranquillity and peace, greater perhaps than I have ever experienced. Do you, the new Aaron, raise your hands and bless me also. I remain, Monsignor, your humble and affectionate servant and friend in Christ,

A. R.

XLVI.

TO THE CAPUCHIN FATHERS AT ROVERETO.

He expresses his gratitude for their sympathy in his trial.

Strèsa,

February 19th, 1851.

Very Reverend Fathers,

The letter which you have, with one accord, been good enough to address to me, has given me a taste of that sweetness and delight described by the Psalmist in the words: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." If the comforting and charitable expressions of a friend in Christ are always cheering and helpful, how much more is this the case when they come not from one friend only but from many fathers and brothers, united among themselves by the most sacred ties and forming but one family in our Lord's service. When with one heart and one voice they encourage us in our afflictions, it almost seems as though they considered themselves our companions in misfortune, and we know that they have first learned for themselves the celestial wisdom and consolation they impart to us. When you, Reverend Fathers, animated by the unfailing charity of the Seraphic Order, appear to change places with me in resenting the injuries caused by the excessive zeal of certain persons, then I, in my gratitude and reciprocal affection, appear transformed into you, I seem to become one of your number. This is that union in Christ that draws together those who live apart and makes them dwell together in spirit as brethren. For it is the spiritual union rather than the corporeal which the Psalmist commends: it is through this that we are brothers

and live together, and our dwelling-place is Christ. I beg you then to accept my sincere and cordial thanks for your kind sympathy, I would fain say my congratulations for not cherishing merely in your hearts but communicating to others that sacred fire of charity, which alone is able to unite in one body all the various Orders that adorn the Church, and not in one body only but in one heart and one soul. Thus is it that the host of the Lord should be united, thus will it be formidable and invincible.

In your esteemed letter you reminded me of a great truth, namely, that present trial never fails of its reward. My grief is mitigated by considering that those who assail me, not always in the most courteous manner certainly, are at least moved to some extent by zeal for the purity of the faith, a thing so precious that everything must give way to it.

I consider, further, that such things are permitted by that Eternal Creator and Lord, without whose will nothing is done in heaven or on earth, who disposes of everything according to His unerring counsel, and draws a greater good even out of what is mischievous. This single thought is sufficient to give us perfect tranquillity, and, I will say, consolation even in adverse circumstances. Nor does our Heavenly Father fail to give with the temptation such strength as is necessary to overcome it, provided we place our trust in Him and pray to Him. As for me, I should find it difficult to say how many advantages and compensations I have received through my adversaries. How many friends in Christ have appeared whom I did not know before! How many persons unknown to me, have taken up my cause! How much more closely my old friends have been drawn to me; how many proofs of special affection have they given me! I do not number among these advantages the praise, always dangerous to our self love, by means of which many have tried by speech and in print to counteract the blame of adversaries; but I count among the most precious advantages the many prayers offered for me by a great

number of the faithful, steadfast adherents of charitable truth and truthful charity. Your letter, Reverend Fathers, forms a notable instance of this noble spirit.

That my poor soul may derive some spiritual advantage from the tissue of events woven by our Lord, which has been more consoling than painful and may acquire the courage that is born of conflict: this is my earnest desire, this is what I expect and hope for from the prayers of good men and yours in particular. When I turn my eyes upon myself, and perceive how little I am disturbed by what passes around me, and how much more embittered my friends are than myself, I begin to doubt whether much profit can be drawn from the pain that is felt so little. In any case I trust our Lord will look rather to my desire to profit by tribulation, a desire which I owe to His pure bounty, than to the degree of suffering. Your prayers Reverend Fathers will assist me in this matter also.

With sentiments of most sincere reverence and affection,

I remain,

Your humble and devoted servant in Christ,

A. R.

XLVII.

TO DON PESSINA AT MILAN.

He explains the meaning of the phrase to do much for God.

October 20th, 1852.

The phrase *to do much* for God certainly requires explanation, in order to take a correct view of the matter and avoid illusion. If by the word *much* many external actions are indicated, or one work rather than another, it may happen that what seems much in the eyes of men is little, and even less than nothing in the eyes of God. *Much* is never done in the spiritual life, except when what is done is in keeping with the will of God. The will of God may comprehend many external actions, but it may likewise require few external actions and much virtue, prayer, contemplation, patience; &c. Thus Our Lady of whom so little is recorded, accomplished far more than St. Paul himself with all his labour and preaching. This solid principle evades all the deceptions of self-love. When a man desires to do the will of God alone, and is ready to serve Him with golden indifference either by means of many external or many interior works, then he may be sure of doing much for the Lord.

But how are we to know the will of God? One sure way is that of religious obedience. As this is indisputable, it is likewise an undoubted fact that those who offer themselves to God without conditions or preferences desiring only to do much for Him and submitting themselves to obedience for the sake of ascertaining His will, these, I say, will infallibly attain their end. If God desires much external work from them, He makes it known to them through their Superiors, it being always in His

power to do so. If He desires something different He makes this known also in the same way. Thus man is led to God and is sure of doing much for the Lord without fear of deception, whilst he has acquired a right to His assistance, and the additional merit of self-denial. For this reason Jesus Christ has invited all those who seek perfection to follow the evangelical counsels.

Certain faithful priests and laymen for this end and upon this principle offer themselves to God in a religious society. Such is the Institute of Charity, which places no limit to the external action of its members but requires that this action be regulated by obedience. Nor has God ever failed to give greater opportunities of work to the Institute than its members were able to undertake.

In order to raise the edifice of this perfection it is certainly necessary to make up our minds to deny ourselves, laying down a foundation of mortification and humility, as well as of lively faith in God, who is always with the man who consecrates himself to Him, and will not suffer him to be tempted beyond his strength. He who wishes to do much for the Lord, must overcome the habits opposed to Community Life, which conduces not a little to make a man perfect.

Your humble and devoted servant,

A. R.

XLVIII.

TO THE REV. W. S. AGAR.

An answer to the question : " Whether the pleasure one feels in consequence of a good action is to be considered as a secret movement of self-love?"

Stresa,

Feast of the Epiphany, 1854.

My dear Father Agar,

It would afford me great pleasure indeed to be able to give a satisfactory answer to the questions you proposed to me in your welcome letter of the 13th of October last ; but as they are of a very subtle nature, I doubt whether I have correctly caught your meaning, and even if I have, whether I shall be able to make my reply sufficiently clear.

If, then, I understand you aright, you say that it sometimes happens that when you do a good action, even with the best intentions, there arises within you a certain feeling of pleasure which seems to have something of the nature of self-love in it, and you ask me :

1st. Whether this feeling is a secret movement of self-love.

2nd. Whether it is an effect of the good action itself, or rather of an act of reflection which you make upon it, and on occasion of which the pleasure or satisfaction you speak of arises within you.

We certainly have not the power of penetrating into the depths of one another's hearts, and frequently not even into our own. I cannot therefore pretend to

know or to state with any certainty the exact nature of the movement or feeling in question. The utmost I could do would be merely to hazard a conjecture. Instead of addressing myself to your particular case therefore, I think it preferable briefly to lay before you in general the doctrine relating to these matters. Indeed it seems to me that this is what you principally wish me to do. Then with the true doctrine to guide you, you may perhaps, by carefully searching into your own interior, be able to ascertain the precise character, good or evil, of the feeling you mention.

In the first place, then, you will observe that whenever we perform a good, noble, or useful action, there naturally and necessarily springs up a feeling of pleasure within us. But this feeling may be of two kinds, which for clearness as well as brevity's sake, I shall call *objective pleasure* and *subjective pleasure*.

The objective pleasure is that which arises from the love of what is good in itself, independently of any relation it may bear to ourselves, as for example, "the hunger and thirst after justice," the love of God's glory, the love of our neighbour, &c. This kind of pleasure is, I need not say, purely and simply good, and in no wise opposed to humility or to any other virtue; being solely an immediate and necessary effect of what is intrinsically good and holy. Thus, for example, that an apostle like St. Francis Xavier should feel delighted, overwhelmed with joy, at seeing himself made an instrument for the saving of so many souls, and should thank God for it, was just and praiseworthy, and was a necessary consequence of his ardent love for God and his neighbour. Holy, likewise, was the joy of him who said in the Psalms: "I will sing praises to thee in the sight of the Angels; I will worship towards thy holy temple, and I will give glory to thy name, for thy mercy and thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy holy name above all."

But the thing is not quite so simple when we speak of that other kind of pleasure which may be aroused in us on

occasion of our performing some good action, and which I have called subjective pleasure. And first of all, there can be no doubt that there is such a thing as objective love even in respect to ourselves. Thus we may rejoice at the gifts and graces which God has bestowed upon us, or at the good which we do by His grace, giving at the same time all honour and glory to Him alone, and again we may rejoice because our soul becomes in this way enriched with merits and because of the "Crown of Justice" which we thus fondly hope to receive through the merits of Jesus Christ. By so doing we show that we love and feel pleasure in objective good, although realized in our own persons; and in all this there is not the least pride or any other defect whatever. It is a holy gladness which the Royal Psalmist encourages us freely to indulge in when he says: "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him, and let the children of Sion be joyful in their King." It is that glory of which St. Paul wrote: "Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord."

I said that this is an objective pleasure; I might have said with equal truth that it is at once objective and subjective; it is the point wherein these two species of pleasure meet and become identified the one with the other; but as the objective predominates, it sanctifies the subjective. What do we do in fact when we seek our own sanctification, and delight in it as our greatest treasure? What is sanctity? It is the love of God: union with and fruition of Him as the sovereign Good. We love, therefore, the object supremely worthy of love. Hence to delight in our sanctification is to delight in this objective love, in which the individual who has, by God's grace, the good fortune to be possessed of it finds his perfection and his all. Here, therefore, there is as yet no pride.

What, then, is that purely subjective pleasure of which the same cannot be said?

It is that species of enjoyment which has self and our own excellence for its end. If in this enjoyment we were to make ourselves our ultimate end, we should be guilty

of a grievous sin, manifestly a sin of pride. But we may also take delight in ourselves and our own excellence in such a way as to keep that delight within proper bounds, that is to say, we may take it in a way subordinate to our ultimate end, and with such moderation that no wrong is done by it to any one. In this case there would be no sin, but there would also be no merit; we should merely not be going beyond the limits of what is lawful. The reason of this is, that the love which causes such delight in us is a natural and spontaneous love, of which it is impossible for us wholly to divest ourselves. Nevertheless, although this natural love, considered by itself, is not a source of merit, there may be merit accompanying it, a merit which will be great in proportion to the exertions we make to curb it and to keep it in order, and even sacrifice it, at least in part, for the sake of a nobler love and delight, that is for the sake of objective love, the pure love of God and of our neighbour—in case it should come into collision therewith. And the delight experienced in producing and maintaining this order would be good, just and praiseworthy.

Here, however, the spiritual man must exercise a continual watchfulness over himself, in accordance with the precept of our Lord: "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation;" because as we are all infected with the corruption of original sin, the subjective delight which, taken by itself alone, is not moral but rather physical, and therefore *per se*, neither good nor evil, easily passes the legitimate bounds and becomes disproportionate and, of course, disordered.

If we wish to analyse this delight which springs from the feeling and love of ourselves, we shall find that it is of two species, the one proceeding from instinct, the other from reflection. This, as you see, brings me to your second question.

Let us first examine the instinctive delight, that we may understand its nature and see the dangers which it creates for Christian humility; we may afterwards do the same with the complacency which proceeds from reflection.

The instinctive delight, as we have said, springs from our natural feeling. Now I must direct your attention to a fact which manifests itself generally not only in man but also in mere animals, in everything, indeed, that has the feeling of life. It consists in this, that whenever an intense feeling, a vivid and unusual sensation is excited in a living being, whether rational or not, there is a corresponding increase of activity on the part of the instinct. This increase of energy makes the being feel as if it were aggrandised ; it assumes a certain air of triumph. To give you an example of the lowest kind, sufficient however to explain my meaning, see how pride is imitated by the sensitive principle in the peacock, in the turkey-cock, and generally in all male animals which are stronger than the female : they seem to have more pride in them. That which occurs in this species of feeling, occurs also in every other species, whenever the feeling acquires a certain degree of intensity. The animal life is then more vigorous, but the animal cannot make any comparisons, because the sense feels indeed that which is in the sentient subject itself, but feels nothing of what belongs to other subjects. When, however, this feeling arises in a being who, like man, besides being sensitive is also rational, it naturally gives him a certain impulse to pride. For he then imagines himself to be more than he really is, or to be capable of doing more than in reality he can do : moreover he is blind to everything which is external to, or not felt by him ; because he remains absorbed by what he feels in himself and loves to keep his attention fixed on that alone. Thus he at once judges too favourably of himself and too unfavourably of others : unjust alike to all, he has a tendency to have a high opinion of himself and to despise others. This explains not only why the great, the rich, and the mighty are very commonly prone to pride, but also why all strong and ardent passions, even the vilest, dispose a man to pride, and have in them a certain haughtiness and arrogance. For we must remember that

this most dangerous *sense of one's own energies* extends equally to every kind of energy and faculty. There is a feeling which accompanies the exercise of one's physical energies and sensations; a feeling which accompanies the exercise of one's intellectual energies; and likewise a feeling which accompanies the exercise of one's moral energies and faculties. And every purely subjective feeling, no matter what its kind, if it be deep and keen, is a temptation to pride.

The consciousness of our own energies, then, is fraught with danger to humility and justice; and in order to repress this insolent and arrogant feeling, which, owing to our original corruption, is always ready to spring up within us, and sometimes with terrible power, we must wage a continual war against it. This is that great work of *Christian mortification*, in which all the Saints have struggled on laboriously even to the end of their lives, I mean the crucifying of the old man with all his concupiscences: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." What is it to deny oneself, but to contradict and repress the sense of one's own powers? What is it to take up one's cross, but to combat this arrogant feeling, even at the cost of that life which produces it? Hence the great utility of those tribulations by means of which God in His wise providence tries His servants and raises them to incredible heights of perfection: "When I am weak then I am strong," said St. Paul.

Nevertheless, this subjective feeling of our own strength cannot be completely vanquished unless, besides chastising it by mortification, we also oppose to it another and a stronger feeling, though the soul may not be conscious of it; a supernatural feeling, which by its prevalent force will entirely conquer and subjugate the natural one. When this has been done, we have arrived at that happy state which is known by the name of *Spiritual Death*.

I need not tell you, that this supernatural feeling, which alone has power to subdue and enslave the other, is

the feeling which the true Christian has of the presence of God and of the love of his neighbour, a feeling which is eminently *objective*.

In speaking of the instinctive feeling, I have confined myself to citing an example from animal life. But there is also a subjective feeling in the order of intelligence and in the moral order likewise, although in these there is almost invariably a certain amount of reflection accompanying it. Whenever our mind, by making some unusual step forward, attains a degree of knowledge beyond what it had before, and whenever our will happens to resolve on a good deed which is new to it, or performs extraordinary acts of virtue (extraordinary, I mean in relation to our habitual moral state), the operation is in both cases accompanied by the consciousness of an aggrandizement of self, and this consciousness may easily incline us to pride, though it need not necessarily be an act of pride. It would not be so if it remained strictly within the limits of right nature; for even right and well-ordered nature feels its own excellence. But vicious and disordered nature exaggerates that excellence, and, instead of keeping it within the bounds of reason, loves to look on it as an absolute greatness of man himself; and thus it becomes an incentive to pride.

In this connection you may find it useful to take special note of one of those singular laws which preside over the subjective feeling of which we are speaking. It is the following: The more habitual our intellectual or moral acts become, the less vivid and consequently the less dangerous is the feeling we experience of them; so, on the other hand, the less we were previously accustomed to perform those acts, the more vivid and consequently the more dangerous, is the feeling they produce in us.

This explains why men who by long study have attained to solid learning, are ordinarily speaking less liable to be troubled with that feeling of self which is an incentive to pride; and it also explains why beginners in the practice of virtue are more liable than their betters to

be elated with vain notions about their own spiritual progress.

Now as the remedy against the first species of pride, which is roused by the feeling of the animal life, consists in mortification and in an increase of supernatural life; so the remedy against this second species of pride, caused by the consciousness of our intellectual acts, consists in opposing to it a clear and vivid knowledge of those reasons which overwhelmingly prove to us the necessity of always keeping ourselves humble of spirit: but above all in opposing to it the supernatural knowledge of the True and Absolute Wisdom, compared with which all our knowledge is ignorance and darkness. And as regards the third species of pride, the most malignant of all, which is occasioned by the feeling of our virtuous acts, the remedy consists in nothing else than an intimate and supernatural persuasion of our absolute moral impotence, according to the words of Jesus Christ: "Without Me you can do nothing;" and of St. Paul: "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish." Indeed, not only is it a fact that whatever good we do (and there is no true and complete good apart from the supernatural) comes from God; but when we have soared up with mind and heart even to the essential sanctity of God Himself, and then view ourselves in the light of that sanctity, we discover that, of ourselves, we are liars and sinners, and that whatever good we may do, we can always say with truth: "I am an unprofitable servant." The more effectually to defend ourselves from this spiritual pride, we shall also find it of great advantage to try to understand well, that moral good is essentially a thing of so simple and at the same time so complete a nature, that any grievous sin is enough totally to destroy it; and again that a single grievous sin demands, according to justice, both an infinite detestation and an infinite satisfaction; and that even venial sin itself is such a stain that the soul, while defiled with it, cannot be admitted to the vision of

God in heaven. All this, when vividly grasped by the mind, has the effect of banishing from us every thought of self-esteem, or at least of suspending any favourable judgment which we might be tempted to form of ourselves, either because of the consciousness of some grievous or at least of some venial sin, or because of the doubt we must always entertain regarding our own moral state, since it is always impossible for any one to know with full certainty whether he "be worthy of love or hatred," whatever particular acts of virtue he may perform.

So far with regard to the feeling which accompanies the immediate acts of the human faculties—that feeling of one's intellective power, and that other feeling of one's moral worth, which create a tendency to pride, and are pride when the will loves them as its end. We have seen that, by opposing to the wayward instinct a reflection illumined by faith, together with the other means we have pointed out, we can through the grace of Jesus Christ, vanquish all these temptations which arise spontaneously from our disordered nature. If, however, reflection itself should conspire with them, or become vacillating and weak, then the feeling would be aggravated, and greater dangers would lie in wait for us.

In an adult, reflection accompanies most of his actions, and it is of a more or less elevated order according as he happens to be more or less advanced in mental and moral development. Hence if reflection is proud, there will be as many ways or forms of pride as there are orders in the reflection* to which the adult may attain in the course of that development.

Reflection sins by pride when it passes an exaggerated and unjust judgment in one's own favour—a judgment usually based upon that instinctive feeling of one's excellence of which we have spoken. As soon as we

* Reflection is the turning of the mind upon something that we already know. The first order of reflection, then, has for its object the knowledge acquired by intellectual perception. A reflection upon this reflection is the second order, another upon this second is the third order, and so on. (*Tr.*)

commence judging in this way we begin to sin ; because no man can be his own judge. Still heavier would our sin be if from particular acts of virtue we presumed to judge favourably of our habitual state ; since this state is a totally different thing from those acts, and the clear knowledge of it is reserved to God alone.

Sometimes, however, reflection is most rapid, and accompanies that feeling with only an obscure and implicit judgment, so that in order to detect this snare of self-love much meditation upon ourselves is necessary. And this is one of the reasons why sometimes there lurks within a man's heart a deep-seated pride, although he at the same time goes on performing particular acts of divers virtues and even of humility. Indeed, there are certain persons who imagine themselves to be humble, because they have not any consciousness of explicit acts of pride, nay they are, as I have said conscious of performing partial and explicit acts of self-abasement, which seem to them humility, because they are such considered in themselves and have the appearance of being such ; whereas in point of fact these persons are full of pride, by reason of a haughty and habitual spirit of self-conceit which is always in the ascendant.

This species of pride is more easily discovered in its effects than by seeking to observe it in itself. Anger at slight offences, which are sometimes in reality no offences at all, but are resented and magnified by self-love ; readiness to despise others ; a too jealous care of one's rights and of one's honour, and the placing of an exaggerated value upon these things ; an overweening confidence in what one does ; temerity in judging ; a bold tone of self-assertion when success happens to have attended one's undertaking ; these, and such as these, are so many sure indications of the presence of this enemy, however much one's words, protestations, or even a number of particular acts or practices may seem to proclaim the contrary.

Now pride is always more malignant, more wilful, and more cunning in its self-justification, the more elevated is

the order of reflections to which it belongs, because a more elevated reflection expatiates in a wider sphere of intelligence. On the one hand, man has more light for knowing the truth, a circumstance which makes his fault all the worse, while on the other, the proud judgments which he pronounces about himself are more absolute, more universal, more free.

These judgments may be sinful from two reasons: first, because by them man rashly pretends to pronounce on what he is ignorant of; second, because by them he judges falsely of that which he knows.

A proud man judges of that of which he is ignorant, whenever he peremptorily puts himself down as better than everyone else, as the Pharisee did when he said: "I am not as the rest of men, extortioners," &c. By this pronouncement as St. Augustine remarks, he was passing a sweeping and wholesale condemnation on all men on the face of the earth, himself alone excepted. Now he could not certainly have known how every one of the numberless individuals composing the entire human race stood in regard to virtue. He was, therefore, arrogating to himself a knowledge which he did not possess; and this solely through pride. Now this kind of sin is easier to commit and of more frequent occurrence than might be supposed, and what leads to it is that habitual judgment by which a man always esteems himself as something more than his neighbour. Persons so disposed can never form a high opinion of others, are very ready to forget others, and care for nothing but themselves. This is that form of pride commonly known as egotism, a vice which is directly opposed to charity.

The proud man, moreover, judges of that which he is ignorant of whenever he prefers himself to some other individual in respect to interior virtue or holiness, as did the Pharisee when he added the words: "as also is this publican;" for the interior and moral state of a soul is an inscrutable secret to human eyes, known only to God "who searcheth the reins and the

heart." By this judgment, therefore, the proud man has the audacity to credit himself with the knowledge and authority belonging to God alone.

The second way in which, as we have said, the sin of pride may be committed by a reflex judgment, is when a man, for the sake of self-exaltation, deliberately affirms of himself that which he knows to be false, blinding himself at the same time that he may not see the truth. This is precisely the pride of Lucifer. He could in no wise be ignorant of the infinite excellence of God and of the supereminence of the Divine nature over the angelic, but wilfully turning away his gaze from that most brilliant truth and fixing and concentrating it upon himself alone, he applauded himself with absolute applause, in other words, attempted to dethrone the one true God and to make a God of himself.

Now if we look closely into the matter, we shall find that this second series of proud and false judgments is also that which gives rise to the judgments of the previous class. In fact, herein lies the true source of all the acts and the foundation of all the species of reflex pride. For in every kind of pride man makes himself or his own excellence to be his end, and this is tantamount to placing himself on an equality with or even preferring himself to God, whereas God alone is the end of all things and ought therefore to be recognized by us as such in every way—in our thoughts, in our affections, in our words, in our actions. This Divine prerogative is a truth so obvious, that no man who has the use of reason can say that he is incapable of understanding it, and if anyone refuses to acknowledge it, it is only because he has wilfully blinded himself, by allowing himself to be deluded by the glare of his own excellence—an excellence which as we have explained, is not true, but created by his proud imagination.

Such then, are the ways in which the guilt of pride is incurred through a bad use of reflection. The remedy consists in an intense and dominant love of righteousness ;

in an habitual reflection on the absolute greatness of God and our littleness; and moreover, in a sincere acknowledgement of the many deficiencies and imperfections which are peculiar to our persons; and in doing all this we must be directed, enlightened and strengthened by the grace of God.

I have now to the best of my ability set before you the theory; it only remains for you to apply it to the solution of the two questions which you have proposed to me; since it is only yourself that can, in the light of the eternal truth, search out and discover the nature of the movements of your own heart.

A. R.

SECTION V.

To Nuns of other Orders.

I.

TO MARGHERITA ROSMINI AT VERONA.

On co-operating with God in the salvation of souls.

Milan,

January 4th, 1827.

Dearest Sister,

Thank you for all your good wishes. You may be sure that I return them heartily, with as many prayers for your happiness. I am glad to hear your Sisters labour so cheerfully, and I have no doubt that you desire to imitate them. What a great gain is a soul saved for our Lord! But this is not the work of man that can only reach the ear; it is God who changes the heart. In this matter we are not only ants, as you say, but less even. However it is a priceless favour, deserving of our warmest gratitude, that God should vouchsafe to accompany our useless efforts on the exterior with His secret action on the heart. In this way He is pleased to make man what may be termed a fellow-worker with His Divine Son, the greatest and yet the most humiliating of dignities. I say the *most humiliating* dignity, remembering from whom it comes; under whom man must humble himself, not only on account of his own nothingness, but through motives of gratitude.

Yesterday I received a letter from the Marchesa di Canossa; in order not to disturb her by writing I will ask you to tell her of its safe arrival; or rather, give her this to read. For the rest as she says, we must pray and especially we must have recourse to Our Lady, this is what I beg of you with all my heart. Our dear Mother will do everything and arrange it all with her Divine Son. We have only to remain in peace and not place impediments to the Divine Mercy by our misdeeds. But it is time for Mass and I must go to the celebration of the great Sacrifice. Adieu!

Your loving brother,

ANTONIO.

II.

TO THE SAME.

On union of hearts in God.

Milan,

April 14th, 1827.

Dearest Sister,

I thank you for your last letter, all the more because it has the freshness and fragrance of the spring flowers which bid us raise our thoughts to the goodness of the Creator. Yes, let us be grateful to Him; let us think continually of Him, let us be wholly His. Is not this the only desire of our hearts? I know this is what your heart says, as mine does also, through the grace of our Lord, to which I respond but imperfectly.

There is nothing more delightful than this union of will and affection which I trust exists between us. Can you suspect, as your letter seems to imply, that my affection for you has decreased? Even if I tried I could not fail to love you, and to love you with more than a

brother's affection. The fact of my not writing frequently should not make you doubt me; attribute this to my numerous occupations and my negligence in many things of secondary importance. As to my heart, believe that it is full of affection, that I often remember you before our Lord, that it gives me great pleasure to hear tidings of you, especially from yourself. This love is natural, but I hope that it is also founded in our Lord as I wish all my affections to be. I think that is what you yourself would like best, that we should meet in our Lord in perfect unity of heart. This is the true centre of the greatest love, of the greatest union, the only centre of the union of hearts, a very ocean of love. Farewell! Pray for my many necessities, and in the first place for the pardon of my sins.

Your affectionate

ANTONIO.

III.

TO CHRISTINA PILOTTI, DAUGHTER OF CHARITY
AT VERONA.

On the death of the Marchesa di Canossa.

Rovereto,

April 18th, 1835.

We have all suffered a great loss in the death of the excellent and devout lady, the Marchesa Maddalena di Canossa, whom I have always honoured and revered as a mother. But I feel that this event must be in a special degree bitter and painful to you, her favourite child and, we may say, her inseparable companion. We must adore the designs of Providence so far above our own! Who would not have said that one so worthy of esteem should live long to watch over the Institute she had founded for the good of the Church? And yet this was not to be; she

was to die at a comparatively early age. God saw that this was for the best. We know by the light of faith, to our exceeding consolation, that if it had not been for the best, God would not have consented to her leaving us so soon. This thought alone is sufficient to check our tears, and perhaps even to change them into tears of joy. Who can doubt that her beautiful soul is happier now than on earth? For my part, I could not pray for her without at the same recommending myself to her prayers, feeling that she is already near to God, and that she will not forget her daughters of Charity and all the needy among whom I number myself. I am greatly concerned to hear that your own health has suffered. May God grant you an increase of fortitude! You have an additional reason for not giving way to sorrow, for this would be not a little prejudicial to your health, which is at once so delicate and so precious. I beg you to communicate these my sentiments to all your companions and tell them that with my grief is mingled a certain joy at the happy death of your mother. If God should deign to glorify her with some new signs do not fail to let me know. With much respect I remain,

Your humble and devoted servant,

A. R.

IV.

TO M. MARIA GERTRUDE CERUTTI, SUPERIOR OF
THE CONVENT OF THE VISITATION AT ARONA.

*Of the spirit of the Institute with regard to undertaking
external works of charity. In what sense a soul
may offer herself as a victim to the Sacred Heart.*

Stresa,

November 7th, 1844.

Very Rev. Mother,

You must not mind my giving you a title you dislike, for the title refers to the office you hold as Superior and the state of a daughter of St. Francis, and there is nothing personal about it. As a general rule, it is well to remember that the titles given by men are no indication of personal merit, so we should not pay any attention to them. I, too, am given some grand titles occasionally! What is one to do? I laugh in my heart and let it pass. Now for your letter.

As for the two interior communications to which you refer, I will begin with the second. Our Lord Jesus Christ sent the Apostles, of whom St. Peter was the head; the Apostles were succeeded in the same mission by the Bishops, whose head is the Pope. These are the Pastors and Masters in Israel, and it is their duty to choose and maintain priests and other ministers. We then, and I in particular, are merely disciples, and we have no mission to reform the Church of Jesus Christ. Woe to us if we take this mission upon ourselves! We should be false prophets, of whom the Scripture says: "I did not send them and behold they ran." The Institute of Charity which came into existence apparently by fortuitous

circumstances, but in reality by disposition of Divine Providence, is based upon this principle. Nothing is more strenuously insisted upon in our rules than the necessity of being satisfied with our state as disciples, without ever presuming to undertake the office of reforming the Church. What can we do then without transgressing our limits and acting against the spirit of our vocation? In the first place, we can occupy ourselves seriously in striving to correct ourselves and to do as little harm as possible. Secondly, we should comply with the requests of the Bishops; and thirdly, we should entertain a great desire to see what belongs to the glory of God advance from good to better, and consequently pray a great deal for this object. This is the spirit of our Institute in a few words. You see then that your imagination must have played no slight part in the words which you thought were uttered by our Lord.

I see nothing to notice, and nothing strange, in the fact that you prayed intensely for me to the Divine Goodness, because I have the greatest need of prayer. Not only is it a good thing to do, but I beg you to repeat it as often as possible, and promise you my deepest gratitude in the Lord. Pray above all that our Lord may overcome the obstacles which I constantly oppose to His mercy.

I will take this opportunity of saying something on your offering yourself as a *victim* of Divine love or of the Sacred Heart. The first time I saw you sign yourself *victim of the Divine Heart* I was somewhat surprised, and I will tell you why. It is one thing to offer oneself as a victim, and another to be actually a victim; the offering is not the consummation of the sacrifice, indeed, strictly speaking the quality of victim comes from the fact of its being chosen and designated by some one else for the sacrifice. Now I think it is going a little too far to call yourself a *victim* simply, because you are not yet dead as victims are, and you cannot even tell whether you are destined to die of love for God,

or in consequence of His acceptance of your offering, in which case only you would be an intended victim, though not yet consumed. I thought of suggesting to you, even then, that as you wish to have such a grand title, one so singularly precious and desirable, it would be well to keep within the bounds of truth and sign yourself *victim of desire* or *victim offered*, but not victim alone, because that is a little too much.

This remark applies to calling oneself, or signing oneself, or thinking oneself a victim of the Sacred Heart. I will not say the same of making the offering. The offering of oneself as a *victim* for the greater glory of God and the sanctification of His name, I fully approve. It is the greatest act of charity, for Jesus Christ has said: "greater love than this no man hath that he lay down his life for his friends." This is quite in accordance with the spirit of our Institute. It is laid down in the Constitutions that the "offering of our blood" is to be our favourite devotion, and we are recommended to make it frequently. I will add that this offering, in order to be well made, should be accompanied by certain conditions. 1st. We must be intimately persuaded that, when we offer our life to God for the promotion of His greater glory, we are offering Him nothing valuable or acceptable in itself; and consequently we must have the intention of making our oblation to the Eternal Father, in union with that of His Divine Son and as incorporated with Christ. For if we make our offering as members of Christ, then there is only one Body offering itself, there is only one Victim, Christ dying in Himself and in us, through the intimate union He has contracted with us, who have become the members of His mystical body in Baptism. 2nd. We must be intimately persuaded that our offerings are, after all, words not deeds, that is to say, we are not of ourselves capable of consuming the sacrifice we are making, but must look to Christ to consume it Himself with the fire of His charity. If we beg Him to accept the sacrifice of our life, we must ask for the grace of

fortitude, whereby alone we can endure death in the spirit of loving and unwavering sacrifice. In fact, He is able in the omnipotence of His grace so to arrange that the sufferings of illness and death shall not be fraught to us with those temptations from which He taught us to pray to be delivered. In order to show us how cautious we should be in asking for what is very repugnant to nature, Christ deigned in the Garden to experience the full bitterness of the chalice of His Passion, and asked His Father if it were possible, to let it pass from Him. And so we should offer ourselves as victims on condition that our heavenly Father wills and accepts it, for if the sacrifice is agreeable to Him a soul that aspires to perfection can no longer refuse it, and in this case it is not possible for the chalice to pass until we have drunk it. See how great is the distrust of self which our Lord Jesus Christ would teach us!

It is a good thing to make the offering of our life in this spirit: "Lord, I desire that men may be sanctified as far as it is possible, and if my life be necessary for this end, I offer it to you, on condition that you give me grace to sacrifice it effectually for your glory. Do with me what you will: do not spare me suffering as long as you are glorified, for I trust in you; I trust you will give me grace to endure such suffering." In this way one may truly offer oneself as a victim for one's brethren in Jesus Christ; one may offer one's own body, which is worth nothing, for the salvation and even for the greater perfection of souls; and one may offer the sacrifice of the graces *gratis datae*, which do not make us holier. I think your offering of yourself as a victim will have been made in this spirit, and I approve it in consequence, but I have mentioned the conditions, so that if you have not fulfilled them explicitly you may do so now.

I may add, that when you feel moved to offer yourself as a victim for some minister of God you should not limit the offering to his person, but let it embrace the whole Church. For we should have the greatest affection for the

whole kingdom of God, and use all efforts to promote this reign of God, no matter what instruments He chooses for the great work. This does not prevent one's making the offering for those in particular whom one thinks to be chosen by God to promote the glory of Jesus Christ, but it should be made with the addition, as I have said, of the whole body of the Church, especially because we should never place limits to the Divine mercy, or fear to ask too much.

You see I have passed the bounds this time, writing until I had no paper left.

A. R.

V.

TO THE SAME.

On the same subject. On the choice of books.

Stresa,

November 17th, 1844.

If you have some trifle to suffer for the love of God, you may certainly be glad, and think at the same time how much more others have to bear. It always seems to me a good thing to reflect on what is being suffered at every moment in all parts of the world; how many there are struggling in the agony of death; how many are battling with the fiercest temptations, how many are enduring a martyrdom of interior suffering. We do not know individually those who are tried in so many ways; but even to know how many there are continually suffering in this vale of tears, is sufficient to make us acknowledge that our Lord treats us very gently in comparison, and to make us grateful to Him for it.

I suppose you wish me to say something about the matters you have communicated to me. I have already touched on

the point of calling yourself a "victim," and so you will be prepared to hear me say I should never advise a religious society to take the title of *victims of the Sacred Heart*, as being too pompous, considering that there is nothing more exalted or more honourable than to be the victims of Divine love. A victim of Divine love is more than holy, she has reached the apex of perfection, which, properly speaking is only attained in heaven, when those destined by God to be His true victims shall have accomplished their sacrifice. Now, no one on earth can be certain of being holy without an express revelation, much less can any one be sure of being a victim, that being simply the object of our aspirations. On the other hand, we should always try to hide what belongs to personal sanctity from the eyes of men. How then could all the religious of a congregation proclaim themselves, of their own accord, to be the victims of Divine love, and expect people to give them such a magnificent title? These good religious would be simply canonising themselves, whereas in order to be canonised it is necessary to die first and then to work solemn and public miracles, upon which the Church institutes the process of canonisation.

Moreover, their neighbours could not in conscience give them such a title, for even supposing the religious were persuaded of their right to the honour, no one else could be sure of it without an express revelation. As long as we are in this world, then, let us think of loving God and becoming victims of His love, let us ask and expect the grace, but do not let us usurp such a beautiful name and much less expect the whole world to give it to us. If you will have the kindness to reflect on all this quietly, you will see that the thought of giving the title of "Victims of the Sacred Heart" to the congregation to which you believe yourself called, could only be a trick of the imagination.

I hope you will take my candid expression of opinion in good part; you will certainly be the better for embracing it. Do not on this account cease doing all

the good you can to your neighbour according to the occasions presented to you by Divine Providence, for there is nothing more pleasing to Jesus Christ than to love and do good to our neighbour, especially to souls. The love of our neighbour is the surest sign and most beautiful exercise of the love of God.

You further ask for some advice on the books most suitable for your perusal, and I will give it you in brief. Do not read any mystical author, not even the highly commendable works of St. Teresa. All that is said by spiritual writers who treat of prayer, concerning divine operations in the interior of the soul, may be most profitably studied by those whose duty it is to direct others : but it is of little avail, nay, it may be dangerous for souls and a cause of anxiety and intellectual difficulty for them to apply these theories to themselves. Your and my St. Francis recommended, beyond all else, simplicity in treating with God and man ; and there is great danger of losing this by becoming involved in mystical subtleties. It is far better to love, contemplate and pray with the least possible reflection upon ourselves, on what takes place in our soul, or on what we are doing. Our good is in God and in our neighbour, not in self. What we have to do is to think of God rather than of ourselves, to seek Him, especially in our neighbour, and not perplex ourselves by measuring the steps we take in our search for Him. The mystics apart, you are doubtless already acquainted with the safest ascetical writers and provided with their works. I shall restrict myself to giving you one piece of advice, and that is to read habitually the *New Testament*, especially the actual words of our Lord Jesus Christ. These words possess an infinite power and sweetness, they are adapted to the learned and unlearned provide celestial nourishment, contain the essence of truth without any human intervention and are of inexhaustible wisdom. *The actual words of Jesus Christ*, that is the food best suited to you and to us all. The rest of the New Testament serves to explain more particularly the words of Christ. You might also read several books of the Old

Testament, especially the Psalms, the Books of Wisdom, Tobias, Judith, Esther, Job and Deuteronomy, trying to refer them to Jesus Christ and His love. In reality all these Books refer to Jesus Christ; properly interpreted, they announce and celebrate His coming; in fine we should always come back to the words of Christ, and find therein peace and rest. In these words we find the commandment peculiar to Christ, first taught by Him, that of love for our neighbour. It is to this, to repeat what I said, that you should direct your chief care and meditations.

I hope you will excuse me if I do not write more than is necessary, and believe that in this also I am moved by the charity of Christ, which contains all that is good. I believe I have answered your questions. I beg you to continue, out of compassion, to assist me by your prayers by which I consider myself abundantly repaid for this light and pleasing task.

Accept the sentiments of esteem with which I remain,
Your servant in Christ,

A. R.

VI.

TO M. GERTRUDE CERUTTI.

Of a pious association, designed by her.

Stresa,

January 5th, 1845.

I have told you before that you must have patience with me, so you will not have been surprised by my delay. I can assure you I am most anxious to serve you according to my poor ability, but time is often scarce: it then behoves me to defer writing and you to practise patience.

Presuming on your permission, I showed my companion, P. Pagani, the design of a pious association which you sent me. He agrees with me that nothing more excellent could be devised than the act by which a Christian offers himself, his own life, and his blood to God, together with the blood and life of Christ and the sufferings of Mary; he, therefore, approves in substance of the devotion and its introduction among the faithful. But as it is a very difficult act to make *sincerely* (which is an important point), he considers that it should be restricted to the few rather than spread among the many, for fear it might become a common and languid formality, as has been the case with other devotions excellent in themselves. He suggests also that the title should be shorter and more simple; that the appointed offering should be made three times a day by the members, or at least once a day, and that, leaving the other rules on one side, the mode of practising the devotion (or rather the sentiments and affections associated with it) should follow immediately upon the Offering, so that this may be well made, with sincere feeling and understanding of what is implied by offering oneself to our Lord.

Further it would be well to add, for the benefit of those who have leisure, some little meditations or reflections on the Precious Blood, the Sacred Heart and the Dolours of Mary, where the sentiments expressed in the Offering could be developed in the form of a soliloquy.

May Jesus replenish your heart with His love: and I think that this will satisfy you. Continue to pray for me, for my own great needs and the needs of those serving our Lord with me.

A. R.

VII.

TO THE SAME.

On the same subject.

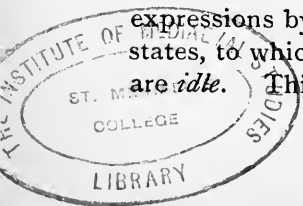
Stresa,

January 20th, 1845

I return the manuscripts with which you favoured me; they are full of fervent sentiments for which I praise the Lord, from whom they proceed. As you sent them in obedience to your Director, who also wishes to have my opinion, I shall give it to you with all sincerity, having first acknowledged my own incapacity.

In general, I do not doubt that you are, by God's mercy, on the right road; think only of going straight on with simplicity and prudence. I do not disapprove of your continuing to write down what passes in your soul for your own edification and the information of those who have the guidance of your soul. I have made only a few special observations, as follows.

In the first place, I pay little or no attention to the expressions by which you seem to infer that in certain states, to which you are subject, the powers of your soul are *idle*. This is not really the case, you do not *notice*



their action, because the object with which they are occupied is general and does not admit of discourse or distinctions. But, as I have said, I pay no attention to this, because in other passages you express yourself more clearly and say as much yourself.

The second and more important remark is this: that whilst you are very diffuse in describing certain sentiments, you seem to be reluctant to speak frankly and freely of certain other things, necessary for the information of those appointed to guide you. This remark applies especially to all those places where you appear to think God wishes you to undertake some mysterious enterprise outside your Convent. As long as it is a question of good works, especially of charity to your neighbour, consistent with the place where God has placed you, the matter would have to be duly sifted, but it would not present any great difficulty. I do not however think this would be the case were it a question of leaving the place where you happily are now, for this fact would itself be suspicious, as long as God did not give you some unmistakeable sign of His will, such as an order from the Pope (which is not very likely just at present). So I think you should take the greatest pains to manifest clearly to your Director, all that passes in your soul on this point, unless indeed you give up the idea altogether and the matter ends there.

The third observation refers to the same subject, and it is quite possible that I have not grasped your meaning. When you speak of the victims that our Lord desires, it seems to me that you think yourself called to found a Convent or society of these victims. You must, however, make a distinction. It is certain that God sent His Word to become incarnate and immolate Himself as a victim for our sins. It is certain again, that the mission of Jesus Christ is precisely that of making His disciples like to Him, victims immolated on the altar of Divine love. "I am come to cast fire upon the earth," He said, and it is fire that consumes the holocaust. "If any man will come

after Me let him take up his cross," and it is amid the torments of the cross that Christ died and His followers must die too. "I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves," and this again because Jesus Christ wished His disciples to make the sacrifice of self. St. Paul wished Christians to be dead and buried with Christ, and he says of himself that he was crucified to the world, and the world to him. In fine, the Holy Scriptures abound in these sentiments, and God has always had, and has His victims. Such were first the holy Martyrs, and then all the holy Confessors, who died interiorly to themselves and only lived and worked for Christ. This immolation then of the whole man in the Creator's honour is the end of the mission of Jesus Christ and of the creation of the world. Happy those souls who are truly victims, consumed by the fire of Christ and seasoned with His salt! It is an excellent thing to preach this doctrine, because it is the doctrine of the whole Gospel. But it would be quite another matter to find out whether a "true society of such victims could be formed." First of all Christ's victims often do not know themselves to be such. Who can know the secrets of his own heart or securely probe those depths which the eye of God alone can penetrate? And again the victims of Jesus Christ would not allow themselves to be called by such a title, like the celebrated martyrs of Lyons, who would not allow themselves to be called martyrs, saying: "We are not yet dead, we have not accomplished our martyrdom."

In the fourth place, in order to form such a society it would be necessary to know who are to be the members. Now God alone knows who are His true victims, and if man were to designate them before seeing them crowned in heaven, he would run the risk of collecting persons who would run away from the altar when the moment of immolation arrived. In the fifth place, religious societies are intended to take imperfect men and assist them, with God's grace, to attain perfection, whereas victims are already perfect, they do not require to associate or

even know themselves to be victims. Sixthly, victims only become such by means of that final act of perfection, whereby they immolate themselves: and this act is the work of God; so that no one in this world, no matter how well he might preach, or exhort others to well-doing, could ever induce a single person to become a *victim*. Hence a society undertaking to form *victims* would be usurping the work of God. It is not possible, in my opinion, to institute a society with this title, which would appear ambitious to the devout, and to the world ridiculous.

What then can one do? That which the holy founders of religious orders have always done: unite persons aspiring after perfection, and give them every opportunity of becoming perfect by means of prayer, mortification, poverty, solitude, &c.; animate them, as much as possible, to be fervent, to work to please God only, to seek that which is most perfect, to undertake, especially, every kind office towards their neighbour, even to the shedding of blood. In the fulfilment of these offices there are many opportunities of making the sacrifice of self, as Jesus Christ did for our love and our salvation, and we are thus enabled to fulfil the great precept of love and to fulfil it perfectly, ready to give our lives if necessary. And it is by the exercise of charity towards our neighbour that we most surely show our love for God. There can be no illusion in doing all possible good to our neighbour, when it entails labour, humiliation and suffering, more especially as we are guided in these exercises by obedience which is the faithful interpreter of the Divine will. "If we love one another," says St. John, "God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us. My little children let us love not in word but in deed and in truth." God be blessed and praised for ever if He choose victims from among those persons who purpose to seek His will alone and spend themselves for the good of their neighbour! This is what we wish for and implore. Let us ask our Lord to send His heavenly fire throughout the earth and

to accept the holocaust in the odour of sweetness. Having done what we can on our part, let us trust and repose in Him and believe He will forgive us our sins. As far as we are concerned, let us indeed offer ourselves to our Lord and to His love, without imagining, however, that we have already become His victims: let us offer ourselves in the manner which I described to you at the end of last year. Let us exhort our neighbours to make this beautiful offering, but without letting them think they are really victims; all this should be left to our Lord, and we should rather let all believe themselves far below such heights. Let us imitate St. Ignatius the Martyr. It was only on hearing the roar of the lions about to devour him, that he exclaimed, full of joy: "Now do I begin to be a disciple of Christ."

These, Reverend Mother, are my observations. I must now inform you of the progress of the little book, which is to contain the exercises of the *Offering*. The time destined for the little work last autumn was all taken up by business and engagements which charity forbade my postponing. I am very anxious, should it please God, to perform such a pleasant task; but when? God only knows: I see no chance for several months. Pray that God may give me the necessary light, affections and diction to make it useful to souls.

A. R.

VIII.

TO THE SAME.

In what sense we may be indifferent to supernatural gifts.

Stresa,

February 22nd, 1845.

The desire of perfection is good, and it is quite right that we should place no limits to it, if by perfection we understand the love of God and our neighbour, in which it really consists. Who is there that would set limits to the love of God and our neighbour? And how could we fail to desire its increase in us, or ever say "Enough?" Indeed, we may extend our hopes beyond all bounds, if these hopes are based simply on the mercy of our Lord and not on self, which we should greatly fear. If by perfection you meant something different from Divine love, such as graces *gratis datae*, in which perfection does not consist, then I fully approve of your being indifferent and rather fearing than desiring them. When the effects are good, if they produce peace and tranquillity which do not make us indolent or careless about our duties, we should not be afraid of them or scrutinise them too much. Even if they were illusions, they can do us no harm; we must take them as they come and go on our way.

I hope the devotion of the Offering will do good. By the way, I have told dear Don Pagani, who is publishing his *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, to insert it at the end of the book; and I will then introduce it among ourselves. As you say, it is thoroughly characteristic of the Institute of Charity, and was expressly recommended in our Constitutions, as far back as the year 1828.

As for the desire you express that I should direct you

I see no necessity for it. For the rest, I am disposed to advise you in case of need, as I told you before. Continue to pray for me and for our Institute that God may give us all the spirit of our holy vocation, which is all comprised in love. Accept the sentiments of esteem with which I remain,

Your humble and obliged servant in Jesus Christ,
A. R.

IX.

TO MOTHER M. GERTRUDE CERUTTI.

How in the Institute the devotion is practised of offering one's own blood in union with our Saviour's.

Stresa,
June 9th, 1845.

I think you will be pleased by my copying for you a portion of the Constitutions, recommending the oblation of our own blood, written in 1828.

In Nos. 705 & 706 it is written :—

“The *oblation of our own blood* in union with the Blood of our Redeemer Jesus Christ is a devotion which should be most dear to us. And we earnestly desire that this oblation should be made frequently, by the Presbyters of the Society and the chief superiors, especially if they are pastors of the Church. Let each one make it with humility and fear of self, but strengthened in hope in union with the Precious Blood of our Lord and God Jesus Christ. And should any one fear lest the Father accept the offering of a sacrifice which he might not have power to perfect, (since this oblation must not be in words only) let him abandon himself entirely into the hands of this most loving Father, and leave it to His mercy to accept only that portion of the sacrifice which He knows

His grace will enable him to complete, or else grant him strength to consummate his oblation more fully. This oblation may be made by each of us in private, and at certain times in public for the general edification. The Priests may renew it privately at Mass, and those who are not Priests when they receive Holy Communion."

On reconsidering the possibility of an *Association* of persons desirous of practising this devotion, and thinking of the Ascribed Members of the Institute, into which class Religious of both sexes are admitted, who participate in our common works and indulgences, it occurred to me that a *Sodality* of Ascribed Members might be formed to practise and cultivate this fervent devotion, which cannot fail to be pleasing to our Lord. This I am disposed to do, and you, if you think well, might belong to it with your Community, and acquire thereby the indulgences granted by the Holy Father to our ascription.

As for the question, "whether you may follow your interior attraction in treating with God," do so by all means, provided this does not distract you in your duties as Superior, or curtail the time you should devote to the care of the Convent. At the same time, you must beware of letting your imagination deceive you: keep to the words of Christ and solid evangelical virtues. These alone we can unfeignedly desire, since without them all spiritual delights are worthless.

As for my being offended by your telling me you thought me more learned than holy, it made me laugh. It was not a rash judgment I can tell you! At the same time, you must not believe what people say of my learning either, for the truth is I am very ignorant, in all the extension of the word. I renew my thanks for your charity to our good Sisters in England. And I remain in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Your most humble servant in Christ,

A. R.

X.

TO THE SAME.

We must not expect to be absolutely certain of the state of our soul, but abandon ourselves wholly into the hands of God.

Stresa,

March 17th, 1846.

Very Rev. Mother,

In my last letter I said that the Rev. Canon will have told you to hope that some of your thoughts come from God, because in such matters it is better to be content with hope, wherein there is a greater act of abandonment than in seeking to know absolutely what God may wish to hide from us. If there be one thing that we should wish to know with absolute certainty it is surely our eternal salvation. Yet God has not willed that even the Saints should be fully assured of their salvation as long as they are here in this world. So completely is their state hidden from them, that not even St. Paul could say he was justified. If it has pleased God to leave us always in some uncertainty concerning the state of our soul, may He be blessed, who saw this was best for us, and let us live content in His loving arms.

Why should you disturb yourself, Reverend Mother, because I said *some thoughts*? You understand the necessity of using such an expression, because you are well aware that many thoughts proceed from nature and may even come from the devil, though these cannot harm us without our consent. You know that even the prophets did not always speak by inspiration, that their every thought did not come immediately from

God. You know that there is no one without sin in this world, as the Scripture says, likewise that there is no sin without thought, so that it is certain that the thoughts from which sins are derived as from their principle, cannot come from God who is the fountain of sanctity. All this you know, so why should you be disturbed? The feeling, which gave rise to this disturbance, is one of those I should like to see rooted out of your soul for ever, for it cannot be altogether good. You did quite right to tell me of it, because it gives me an opportunity of warning you, as you wish, to preserve greater tranquillity, not to be frightened so easily, and also not to presume. I have told you before that there may be some imagination, and, if you like, some illusions in your experiences, but that this cannot do any harm to your soul, which, through humility and confidence in God and obedience, avoids all danger and advances securely. Go on tranquilly in the love of God and charity to your neighbour, without troubling about anything else, simply examining your thoughts to see whether they are good and reasonable, or bad and arbitrary. For the rest, you do well to manifest your inspirations so that anyone directing you may pass judgment on them or suspend his judgment, according as our Lord inspires him. As to the fear you sometimes have that I think there is some *duplicité* or *pretence* in you, put it away entirely, for even supposing I did think so, this would do your soul no harm, and it is of your soul and of pleasing our Lord that you should think. I may tell you frankly that I have never thought so, but I shall suggest that you should open yourself to your ordinary Director, whenever I think this more perfect and prudent.

As for the counsel you ask as to whether you should take a vow of obedience, I repeat what I said before: that if your Confessor or the Bishop disapprove I should not consider it as an inspiration coming from God. But if they approved I should pray for light to know whether I ought to accept such a vow.

The little book I promised you has made no progress; I must wait until our Lord gives me the time and what is still more important, His inspiration. Meanwhile continue to pray and get prayers, which are always useful.

I am, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Your humble servant,

A. R.

XI.

TO THE SAME.

On the same subject.

Stresa,

March 20th, 1846.

I repeat what I said before that even if you were labouring under illusions and deceptions, they would be harmless and could not injure your soul as long as there was no thought of pride, vanity or other passion. And are we not all, poor creatures, liable to deceive ourselves occasionally? It is not error that injures the soul, but sin only. For the rest, as long as we go on with simplicity, without wishing to be certain about what is unnecessary for our salvation or even perfection, we do not commit sin or fall into error or deception. He who leaves the thing where it is, without judging it, is not deceived. It is not necessary to attribute the sentiments which come to us in time of prayer to a deception of the imagination: it is well to leave them as they are, and make use of them to love and serve our Lord better. In order to distinguish what is useful for us to know from what is useless, you may make use of the following rule:

The love of God always comes from God, whether it be manifested under the form of faith, of hope, or of charity. This, and this alone, we must attribute to God

and not to ourselves. All the rest, images, figures, interior voices, &c., we need not attribute to God, but may leave them without passing any judgment, only trying to prevent any disastrous effect, but rather direct them to the increase of our love, which alone is of importance. Continue to recommend me to our Lord.

Your humble servant in Christ,

A. R.

XII.

TO MOTHER. M. GERTRUDE CERUTTI.

About reading mystical works.

Stresa,

April 13th, 1846.

Perhaps I did not explain myself clearly, when I spoke of reading the works of the mystical writers. I am far from condemning these books *in general*. In my opinion, they are useful for Directors and also for some persons who are under direction, but I think they should not be read indiscriminately. It is a matter for the Director to determine in particular cases. I readily submit my judgment to the Rev. Canon, on the point in question, and if he recommends you to read such books, I should make no objection, but if he leaves you at liberty and you wish to know my opinion, it is that you should content yourself with the actual words of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can meditate on these as much as you like, and you will find therein the hidden manna, which will give you strength not only to ascend the holy mountain of God, but to climb step by step to the very summit. May our Lord fill your soul with His consolation at this holy season!

Your most humble and obliged servant,

A. R.

XIII.

TO THE SAME.

*He exhorts her to a perfect love of God and her neighbour,
without fear or anxiety.*

Stresa,

November 9th, 1846.

As regards the good work which has occurred to your mind, I am always inclined to approve and encourage such works, whatever they may be, provided they do really give glory to God. And I think that all holy Founders, particularly St. Francis, are pleased to see their children devote to their neighbour all that they do not need for themselves instead of hoarding it, for charity is the special precept of Christ, the most perfect work, the one that gives most glory to God. Only proceed with all prudence and let the work be well matured.

The temptations that spring from the sensitive part of our nature in opposition to the superior part, such as envy and the like, are the effect of our corrupt nature or concupiscence as St. John says, which rebels against our superior will; they come from the lees of original sin, which remain even after our regeneration, as St. Augustine explains, like the dregs remaining in a vessel after the liquor has been extracted. Hence they are a motive for humiliation, and God makes use of these temptations to show us more clearly what we are. Sometimes He permits the devil to stir up these dregs, which then become particularly obnoxious; and yet we cannot be rid of this annoyance until the vessel itself be broken, that is, the body of death in which we are wandering far from home. Nevertheless, God is always with us, and He conquers in us and for us, giving us thereby fresh

motive for that gratitude which humbles us. The fact of your having offered yourself to our Lord as a victim has no direct connection with such temptations, as you might be inclined to think, even though the temptation took the form of a contemplated martyrdom or mortal agony. I advise you then to reject the thought that such temptations are occasioned and permitted in consequence of the offering made to our Lord, contenting yourself with knowing that they all proceed from your corrupt nature, and knowing that our Lord is always ready to assist you and make you triumph by His grace.

Is not this enough? What more do we want to know? What good will it do us to investigate too minutely the hidden designs of God in our regard? Jesus Christ led His apostles and disciples by this simple and broad and safe path to perfection; He never gratified their curiosity, indeed, He reproved them when they tried to dive into the Divine counsels. That is why I feel that it can do a soul no good to know precisely what step in the ladder of perfection she may have reached by our Lord's goodness: it is sufficient for our Lord to know it. He knows about it and we deceive ourselves only too easily. Instead of indulging so much self-introspection, let our gaze be wholly directed to and taken up by our Lord; He is the safe Way by which to direct our steps, He is the Truth and Life of our life, the sum of all our good. In fine let us *love*, without seeking anything beyond, without even wondering what will become of our love, content to love Jesus alone in Himself and in all our brethren, His members, in all the members of His mystical body the Church. Hence I highly approve of the resolutions you made during your retreat and summed up in those two beautiful words, *love* and *fidelity*. When you pray for me as you do for your own soul you only follow the words of Christ: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' I thank you for your charity which I beg of you to continue, praying not only for my soul but for the souls of all our neighbours. In the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I remain, yours sincerely,

A. R.

XIV.

TO THE SAME.

An answer to the question, whether all that passes in the soul should be manifested to a confessor or director.

Stresa,

December 4th, 1846.

In answer to the question "whether it is better for you to speak of what passes in your soul to your confessor or to endure the anguish of spirit produced by interior troubles," I tell you frankly that I see no harm in manifesting such things with simplicity for your own instruction. I will add, however, that I should not like you to make a necessity of this, but rather that you should learn to impede or annihilate these interior troubles yourself, making use of some simple rules for distinguishing good from evil. For instance, "what proceeds from pure love can never do the soul harm"; "whatever leads us to humble ourselves or to practise any evangelical virtue opposed to our natural instinct, is always good;" "we never sin against our will," and the like. The soul that accustoms herself to solve her interior doubts by the words and the maxims of Jesus Christ gains a great deal and becomes more vigorous, because she leans on God alone, who instructs her by His word. Thus, too, is fulfilled the prophecy made concerning the Redeemer's disciples: "they shall all be taught of God," that is, shall be capable of being instructed by God Himself.

I should not say the same if it were a question of some external work, either of penance or charity towards your neighbour, for in these cases it is always better to ask

advice of one's own director. As regards the interior, *in your case*, you may very well confer with your Director, but in such a way as not to make a necessity of it. If you do so, it should be through devotion rather than for any other motive, for it is most desirable to learn how to keep yourself free from anxiety. Then if any inspiration comes into your mind concerning some work of charity, you should think it over yourself first, and if it seems feasible do not go any further without asking counsel. Supposing the thing is seen to be inadvisable when examined dispassionately, there is no need to say anything about it; if it is doubtful, you should ask advice. Relying on the continuance of your charitable prayers, I remain in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, yours sincerely,

A. R.

XV.

TO SISTER MARIA SOFIA ROSMINI AT THE CONVENT
OF THE VISITATION AT MILAN.

He thanks her for her prayers, and shows her that it is necessary to seek to become perfect with all suavity and tranquillity.

Stresa,

September 10th, 1850.

My dear Sister Maria Sofia

I felt sure that if my absence from your Clothing was a disappointment to you, on account of the charity you bear me, still you would be glad to make an offering of this little privation to our Lord. I am grateful for the prayers you continue to offer for me, but what I should like you to pray for especially is the grace to become good once for all, and to be converted to our Lord, now at least that the world is receding from me and eternity

approaching. Pray that I may begin to be, at least afar off, a *disciple*, now that the Master, who has borne with me so long and so patiently, says to me and to other poor sinners, my companions: *Usquequo vos patiar?* "How long shall I bear with you?" This is my wish, Suor Maria Sofia, my only and most ardent desire, though perhaps ineffectual.

I will say to myself and to you at the same time, that we must be patient and trust so patient a Master and Lord. To want to advance in too great a hurry, especially by main force, is not a good thing, because it gives rise to disturbance. We must learn instead, that the eye of God alone can determine what there is in our souls to polish, to cleanse, to destroy, to build up. These are the secrets of infinite wisdom and the mysteries of Divine goodness. Let us be satisfied to know that the Lord is working in us, without wishing to know too much of His loving operation. Do not let us be disheartened by the daily defects that do not rob us of grace or impede its growth, although we should regret them and make them a motive for humbling ourselves sincerely. Instead of gratifying that curiosity which would like to know everything and instead of being disquieted when we commit a fault, I say, let us try to keep before us the words of our Lord, and ponder on them continually. Let us strive to reduce them to practice by the exercise of charity to our neighbour, especially to those particularly recommended to us by our Lord, His *least brethren*, the poor and all those who suffer in any way whatever. It is by this kind of charity we shall be judged and by its means we shall nourish and foment humility, becoming poor and despised with our poor and despised Lord. And as we go on humbling and detaching ourselves from what is beautiful, great, happy, lovable in the eyes of the world, so much the more shall we love God and *God alone*, like faithful spouses. Adieu !

A. R.

XVI.

TO THE SAME.

He tries to relieve her of vain apprehensions.

Stresa,
December 23rd, 1853.

My dear daughter,

I have read your letter and other papers with all the interest of the charity I hear you, and after invoking the loving Saviour whose birth we are about to celebrate I am going to answer and, I trust, console you a little. You know Saint Teresa desired that her doubts, perplexities and spiritual combats (and hers were indeed many and great), should be examined by the light of solid theological doctrine, not by the imagination. You should desire the same.

In the first place we must remember that there is a great difference between mortal sins and venial sins. Venial sins do not deprive the soul of the grace of God, nor do they take away or even diminish the habit of charity. It may even happen that of two souls, one has more defects than the other and yet possesses a far greater habit of charity. From this it follows, that if we fall into some venial fault, we should be displeased, indeed, but we must not infer that God is no longer with us or that He has abandoned us or means to abandon us. Now I do not see any certain indication of mortal sin in the account you give me of your conscience. This being granted, how can you break out into such expressions as this: "I am a poor slave of the demon?" Here there is manifest exaggeration. Now you must know, that what is contrary to *truth* is never humility, for this

virtue is always founded on truth. "Do not exaggerate anything," I will say with St. Francis of Sales, "be just and good, charitable and patient even with yourself." In this way you will keep your mind calm and tranquil and be the better able to fight against your faults.

But even supposing that you had fallen into mortal sin (of which I see no sign), are you on that account to agitate yourself to such an extent as to be unable to remedy the misdeed? I see that in your Notes of Retreat, you have put these words into the mouth of your Spouse Jesus Christ: "Remember that this is my last expression of generosity, the last proof I shall give you of my exceeding love." Is it possible you know your Saviour so little, as to attribute such sentiments to Him? He came on earth to seek that which was lost; He is pleased to treat with sinners as a physician with the sick; He died on the cross to save them, and shed Blood so precious as to cancel not only your sins, but those of the whole world, and of a million worlds if need be. He was content with absolving without a single reproof all the sinners who came to Him on earth, from Magdalen to the thief, and when He ascended to heaven to become the advocate of sinners, He left His vicars on earth with absolute power to absolve every kind and quantity of sin, saying to Peter: "not seven times but seventy times seven!" And can you venture to place a limit to that mercy which has no bounds; can you determine the last expression of His generosity, the last proof of love He is disposed to give, He whose heart is larger than heaven and earth? So little do you know the Spouse who has betrothed you. Ah, my dear Sofia, try to form a more just idea, one greater and more worthy of that God who abides in your heart, even when you do not feel His presence, and be sure that no matter how magnificent a conception you form of His goodness you will never be able to gauge it, for it is infinite.

Another subject for reflection is the fact that aridity, anguish and even temptation are no proof that we have lost

the love and grace of our heavenly Spouse. His grace is something different to His caresses. The spouse should be content to have His grace without the caresses. Then she *lives by faith*. How beautiful and desirable it is to live by pure faith! This is what our Lord expects of His beloved, He wishes them to trust to His word, His goodness. He wishes them to know that He never changes. Sensible delight, tender affections, consolations and spiritual visitations may cease or change or be modified even by our human feelings or physical disposition; but Jesus Christ does not change. He is the same exactly to-day when His presence is not felt, as He was yesterday when He made Himself felt in abundant joy, and so He will be to-morrow and for all eternity. He is always the same faithful lover of the soul. Have you never read those words of the Canticles: "He stands behind our wall, looking through the window, looking through the lattices?" When you are oppressed by suffering and trouble, think that your Divine Lord is watching and is pleased to see what His spouse is doing, how she invokes Him, how she endures for His sake, and how she conquers through the grace He gives her secretly, without her perceiving it. This is the great means He employs to perfect His elect, to free them from their faults and detach them from all earthly things, and thus whilst he encourages them in faith, they merit by humility.

This holy faith by which the just man lives, will teach you another great truth namely, that in the spiritual combat, as long as one perseveres, and prays and believes in God, the victory may be more or less prompt or slow, but it is certain. It is certain because He who conquers for us and in us, is stronger than all our enemies, all our passions, stronger than the angel of darkness who cannot tempt us more than our Lord allows, and He never abandons us. If the victory is certain, why should you give way to such distress and agitation as you appear to do? Beware of wishing to reach the height of perfection in an instant. In such an attempt there might lurk

a good deal of self-love and confidence in yourself. Beware of trying to do good for your own satisfaction, almost hoping to gain a sensible reward by sheer force. Beware of losing heart no matter how low you may fall; you must not be surprised if you fall; you are wretched, but that God who is always ready to give you His hand and raise you up, is not wretched. You will conquer everything by perseverance. You will have to learn by experience how to fight. There are certain things that we conquer without difficulty by taking the enemy in sport and laughing at him. For instance your wish to eat between meals is a thing to be laughed at. You should regard it as mere childishness, make fun of it and laugh at it and tell your superior about it when the temptation *begins*, then it will vanish of itself. Above all, keep your mind tranquil, and do not imagine it is an act of virtue to depreciate yourself unreasonably, much less to want to gain virtue by violence and with agitation. When a person becomes upset and gives herself up to sadness and tears, she often arouses temptations and makes them stronger. By keeping quiet and taking everything reasonably and discreetly temptations grow less violent and are more easily conquered.

I am sorry I cannot come to Milan at present. We may see each other after Easter. In the meantime the Child Jesus will teach you, as He is so well able to do.

Be devout also to St. Sofia; she was the mother of three virgins, inscribed in the Roman Martyrology, who were called Faith, Hope and Charity. Imitate her; let Faith, Hope and Charity reign in your heart and all will go well with you. Adieu!

A. R.

SECTION VI.

To Secular Persons.

I.

TO LUIGI SONN.

On the blessings of sickness.

Rovereto,

January 29th, 1816.

As I am not well myself and therefore cannot come to see you, I will write to you instead, and we shall see if two sick people cannot console each other and discover how much there is to comfort them both. Our misfortunes, looked at in their true light, are not evils but good. Ah! He who loves God, as we are trying to do, finds that the evils of this life are only so many graces. How many debts we can pay by means of brief moments of sorrow borne with resignation, with humility, with love of God! How many afflictions and how much anguish will be spared us in the life to come! The Saints desired sufferings, sighed for them, and begged them of God with tears; indeed reading of this in their lives I could not refrain from shedding tears myself. And when they obtained them it seemed that they were more humble in the sight of God; they seemed to feel that He was near, that He Himself gave them sweet consolation, speaking to them as a friend, a brother. Oh! how sweet are the consolations that come directly from God! If they turned their

thoughts to Jesus Christ, their master and model, what ineffable sweetness did they not feel seeing Him so great, so humble, so patient, knowing that their sufferings were but a shadow, a taste of those endured by their Redeemer and Brother! Rather did they glory in their tribulation, and the heavier their cross the more closely did they appear to resemble and follow Jesus Christ. One poor woman, of whom I have read, was afflicted by a horrible cancer, and had been in great trouble and pain, when one day a holy man came to visit her and spoke to her of Jesus Christ. So much profit and consolation did she derive from his visit, that though very poor, in want of everything, and suffering terrible pain, confined to her bed for thirty years (at the end of which time she died), she was yet always serene and cheerful, and declared that none of the great or rich ones of the earth could be happier than she was. It is true that we are not Saints; but I do not like this objection, and when it is made to me I always answer confidently that God can make us Saints, that I hope for this grace in Jesus Christ, and that we have all the right to become Saints, for to all alike is open the way to an equal virtue and glory. Yes, so will it be, I trust: we shall attain to sanctity if we pray without ceasing and recommend ourselves to God, to Jesus Christ, to His Mother and all the Saints. Pray for me as I will do on my part for you. I hope you will not show this letter to those who do not hold the same opinions lest truth should be impugned. My ailment is but slight and will soon pass away, I trust.

Yours,

A. R.

II.

TO DEMETRIO LEONARDI AT PADUA.

Advice to a young student at the university.

Rovereto,

February 7th, 1816.

You have done well to lay aside the ceremoniousness which often serves to shroud and obscure sincerity, that beautiful attribute which should be found in our friendship. As for the subject upon which you write I perceive that you retain your usual good sense and judgment; I am glad of it though I did not doubt this would be the case, and I feel the more drawn towards you in consequence. No doubt you find life in Padua very different from what you were accustomed to. However, there is no remedy but to form a small city round oneself within the big city, as you say you have done. The tumult and crowd should be avoided and none of those who are found hovering like vultures round their prey should be admitted to any intimacy. Showing yourself courteous and affable towards all, you should yet live quietly, as much alone as possible, and remember the practice of the Saints. A great secret of tranquillity is occupation and labour, the avoiding of dangerous occasions; thus in peace with one's self one escapes remorse, the stings that is to say of one's own conscience. Who can doubt that you do all this? You love and practise your religion, you frequent the lectures and what is better you take an interest in them and you render your relaxations useful and fruitful. Good-bye!

Yours,

ANTONIO.

III.

TO GIUSEPPE BATTAGGIA AT VENICE.

He urges him to publish a book for priests in Latin, and to place himself at the head of a society for the diffusion of good books.

Rovereto,

May 20th, 1821.

I have received through your kindness five pamphlets which are doubly welcome as coming from you. I am glad also that public notice should be taken of that excellent gentleman, Costanzo Taverna; he well deserved it, and it will serve as an example to others. May God send us many such as he was! They are a blessing to the world. The little sketch of Dr. Martellari, breathing as it does friendship and religion, does credit to his friends, and I was pleased to see it. For all these presents and for the pleasure I have derived from them I am most grateful to you.

I hear from Fontana that you do not object to publishing the *Memoriale vitae sacerdotalis* for the use of ecclesiastics. I consider it an excellent work likely to be popular were it better known, and I should advise you to print it in Latin which is easily understood. That is the language of ecclesiastics, being adopted by the Church in her functions and decrees. We should try to uphold that language as far as possible, according to the intention of the Council of Trent which refuses Minor Orders to any one ignorant of it. Besides this we are accustomed to the Scriptural expressions and public prayers which abound in the book, and are so full of unction and

force in the Latin. Were they translated (even well translated) into Italian they would seem cold and insipid in comparison.

I am greatly pleased to see how you love to employ your art for the good of religion. When the true end is thus kept in view, things acquire real worth and something solid is gained. Continue to cherish and develop these magnanimous sentiments. The contemplated *Catholic Society of Turin* might supply you with a grand field for noble work and abundant fruit. The same design had also suggested itself to me, experience having shown me the power of books over men for good or for evil. In our day this is perhaps the greatest of all forces and the most extensive. The wicked have seen this and made terrible use of the power of the press. Why, I said to myself, should not faithful Catholics oppose arms to arms and draw fruit from that which is used to their ruin? Shall we let ourselves be surpassed by our enemies in circumspection, in sagacity, in energy? Shall they do more for the devil than we for God? Shall the love of evil be more industrious than the love of virtue? Thus I have often considered how one might best turn their own weapons against them, and several times the idea has occurred to me that a printing press supported by a society of generous friends might be of great use in propagating sound Christian doctrine. The motive power of such a *Society* should be the love of religion, which would stimulate the members to disinterestedness, activity, good taste, exactness and perfection in all the details of the work. Were this pious union well organized and showing signs of success it would certainly be encouraged by Bishops, by the Government and by all good Christians. The latter, if the matter were once brought under their notice, would naturally be ready to co-operate, some by selling or circulating the books, others by composing, correcting or embellishing the works, others again with money. The thing well managed would be sure to succeed, because good people are not wanting in our days. Everything however would

depend on the good judgment and tact of the manager who makes the first start. Having had the pleasure of your acquaintance and being aware of your noble and religious feelings, your energy and talents, I have been led to hope that you might execute and bring into being what I had designed. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the Society of Turin to form a judgment about it, and I do not know how the late disturbance may have affected it. You say a similar society exists in Rome. It would be a good thing to obtain further particulars of it. If you undertook the same work at Venice, and the other two societies were well established and directed, the three could form a kind of confederation; the unity of their aim would produce mutual friendship and assistance, and the three branches of the same union would each exert a beneficial influence on the other. The thing would grow though I foresee difficulties and we should want prudent direction. In any case think it over and send me word. It is praiseworthy even to think of what is good. You see that I have written in all confidence as between friends and if you have cause for complaint it is only against yourself, for having shown yourself so amiable. I made up my mind to profit by your kindness and take summary possession of your friendship.

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

IV.

TO THE MARQUIS CESARE TAPARELLI D'AZEGLIO AT
TURIN.

On the usefulness of union and friendship among Christians.

Rovereto,

October 14th, 1821.

You see I am taking advantage of the kind command you have laid upon me. By all means let us lay aside the formalities which certain distinctions create. To this I consent the more readily, trusting you are already aware of my esteem for you, because Christian friendship appears the more beautiful when it overcomes the obstacles raised by the world.

I can assure you, my dear Marquis, or as I should prefer to call you, my excellent friend, that here also good and zealous Christians may be found. Indeed they are to be found everywhere: our family is universal, our brotherhood embraces the whole earth and we are the true cosmopolitans, for not only is the whole world one city to us but one household, one brotherhood, one body. What shall we find greater than our union or more real. More marvellous or sweeter, more intimate or more Divine?

When I call to mind apostolic times, however, and then proceed to consider the increase and development of Catholic Society, I seem to perceive that in this as in other human societies the cohesion between the different parts becomes weakened in proportion to its increase. What an enviable and intimate union was that enjoyed by the early Christians! They had indeed no vast temples, but they met together in their houses to pray with one heart and one soul. What confidence, what equality, what

brotherly love reigned among them ! Further development produced the effect already prefigured when through the abundance of the draught of fishes the evangelical net was broken. In this figure St. Augustine discerned heretics flying from and breaking the net, and the same may be said of those Christians who, through their tepidity, adhere but little or not at all to their body and head.

I do not deny that, even in our day the Church is illumined by many pious and holy men united intimately in one spirit and one body in the Communion of Saints to Christ and His Vicar, the Roman Pontiff ; nor am I ignorant that it is peculiar to those out of the Church, cut off from her unity, to declaim excessively against the times and declare primitive virtue to be lost. I know rather, as I was saying, that the Church is ever holy, and that the ornaments with which she is adorned are known only to God. I know that the good have the consolation of still possessing and finding everywhere dear brothers, fervent friends, with whom, even before meeting them, they are already united in God. Of all this I am well aware and it affords me consolation in my afflictions. What I wish to express, however, is my ardent desire that these good Christians, dispersed over the earth and mingled with the world, should not only love one another in God without being acquainted, but should also learn to know one another in this world. I should like to see a holy intercourse established amongst them, a sweet friendship, with those mutual proofs of love which characterise the followers of Christ and with those fruits of good works which distinguish the good tree from the bad. Thus they would be able to distinguish one another from the children of the world ; they would love and assist one another ; in times of sadness and danger they would be comforted and encouraged and would inspire evil doers with a wholesome fear. By how many bonds should we not be united ! Our union would be pure, holy, Christian, not conformed to this world where we neither expect nor seek repose but directed to the acquisition of heavenly treasures, through the charity

of Jesus Christ, with whom we hope to be united for ever in the bosom of the Father. How desirable it is that we should all be equal and love one another thus in our Lord, excluding the human limitations of blood, of country, of particular sympathies while preserving the due order of charity and maintaining mutual rights and duties ! Were our brother far or near, were he in a high post or a low one, were he known or unknown, we should then show him the same charity, the same loving kindness according to his need. Once this more extended, more fervent, more active communion were established—not in one place only but in many—I should expect to see the religion of Christ acquire a new majesty and beauty, to see the world almost blossom again as in early ages, with greater dignity and variety, inasmuch as new communications and relations would, perhaps, produce effects more varied, more unexpected and more admirable. So beautiful a conception does not seem impossible with the facilities for intercourse which exist nowadays, and taking the times into consideration it would seem almost a necessity. Either the time has come, or in the present course of events it will soon do so, when not only a fervent Catholic, but even anyone who retains a natural love of justice, will feel compelled to withdraw from the crowd, and, as it were, to wear a distinctive badge ; he will feel, as Haller felt, the necessity of close alliance with Catholics whose goodness, being proved by their holy lives, is beyond question—for, unfortunately, even among Catholics, there is cockle to be found among the wheat.

Were this union once established what benefits would be derived from it ! Every good Christian, as you justly observe, would thus when travelling (and nearly everyone travels nowadays) be shielded from the dangers that everywhere beset his faith ; he would find himself, so to speak, at home everywhere, because he would always find his Catholic brethren ready to befriend and assist him. As things are, good fathers are constantly obliged to humour their sons in their desire to see the world, and,

besides the pain of separation, they are left without means of knowing how it fares with their soul and what they are likely to be on their return. This would no longer be the case, and many fears would be set at rest. Such a league would also be most useful in our Universities, which are at present infested by irreligion and licence. Indeed it would be useful in endless cases. At present religiously minded men shrink from observation, and are reserved towards the very persons who have most need of their good example, whilst Christian families are compelled by prudent motives to look askance at strangers. Indifferent Catholics could not fail to be sensible of the stimulus provided by good example, and the misguided would be moved to repentance. Such a union would be no less useful in the interests of justice and the prevention of crime. It would serve as a vigilant garrison, a strong barrier, a well armed squadron, and the evil doer would find himself confronted, not by one opponent or victim, but by the united forces of all that is good on earth.

In fine, dear friend, let this be the object of our aspirations and earnest endeavours. You were beforehand with me, but I could not fail to treat you with the same confidence. I have done no more, however, than develop and expand the thoughts contained in your own letter: I trust that you and the Society will overlook my prolixity in consideration of the sincere love I bear towards Him whom you also love, our Lord Jesus Christ. Every discourse that contains this Adorable Name is so full of charm that one hardly knows how or when to terminate.

With sincere gratitude and respect I remain,

Your affectionate friend,

A. R.

V.

TO SIGNOR LUGNANI, AT TRIESTE.

On controversial writings.

Rovereto,

May 2nd, 1822.

A letter from you would always be a pleasure, but in this case the pleasure is enhanced tenfold by the motive. It is true indeed, as you say, that there is no sweeter friendship than that based on and sanctified by religion. Would that all Christians were convinced of this! So much the greater progress would they make and the enemies of the Church would not succeed as they do, were the forces opposed to them more united. I have often thought of this, looking back with envy at the early days of Christianity when the *brethren*, as they were called, were *one heart and one soul*. Hence you may be sure I accept your sincere and Christian friendship in the same spirit in which it is offered.

You speak of the best mode of dealing with modern unbelievers; and I have read what you say with great pleasure, noting your knowledge of the human heart and of the adversaries with whom you have to deal. That incredulity is Protean in its forms I am convinced; such little experience of the world as I possess has led me to see that our opponents are often totally at variance in character as well in their errors as in their views. A German and a Frenchman, for instance, must be dealt with differently, a disciple of Kant and a follower of Voltaire are as far apart as the earth and the moon. Some are helped by pamphlets, trenchant but eloquent; others prefer more elaborate works. On the whole I think the plan

you propose one of the most advantageous in these days. All the characteristics of the age which you mention,—the necessity of employing *argument*, supported by moral proofs, and of clothing it in a light but scholarly style; the need of writing with fairness, discretion, magnanimity and a conciliatory tone—all this and more is necessary if we would gain over and not irritate unbelievers. And are not charity, and courtesy suggested by the very spirit of Christianity? You have, therefore, my best wishes in a work which cannot fail to draw upon you the blessing of God. Even if I were capable of developing your views I should hesitate to encroach on another's province; such work is also rendered impossible by my numerous cares and occupations, amongst others the writing of some books which I have undertaken. Do not hesitate to set to work and I will vouch for your success.

Apropos of the apologists you mention, have you read Haller's *Restoration of Political Science*? I have been reading it as well as my imperfect knowledge of the language in which it is written will allow me to do. Although it is chiefly concerned with politics I do not hesitate to number him amongst our greatest and most opportune apologists. You will find some sound advice in this work on the manner of dealing with unbelievers. It is a wonderful book; the author unites speculation and experience, delicate and solid reasoning, the elegance and urbanity of the ancients with the rapidity and acuteness of modern philosophers. What beautiful things there are in it! And how well they are said!

I hope that our correspondence thus happily begun will end only with death. Treat me with the freedom that I do you. Tell me about the state of religion and letters in the town, about the library you have charge of, your occupations; in fact everything you tell me of yourself will be very welcome. Let me know also how your scheme succeeds.

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

VI.

TO GIUSEPPE BATTAGLIA AT VENICE.

He praises his institution for boys.

Rovereto,

May 2nd, 1822.

Although our correspondence is not very regular, owing to various circumstances, my pleasure in our intercourse does not diminish. In fact, your beautiful letter has aroused my desire to converse with you and, I might almost say, to provoke you to talk as you know so well how to do.

The Institute where you gather youths together on Sundays for instruction and innocent recreation cannot fail to be pleasing to God and useful to these souls. I can well imagine the pleasure you experience, such joy as worldly men cannot even imagine much less taste of. Happy you! I also know well, as you say how distressed you must feel when some of the boys do not correspond with your efforts. Indeed, charity is rarely content with itself; and it cannot be denied that it is not easy to do everything accurately and perfectly. St. Augustine often complains of this. It is a gift which God gives by degrees, as in the case of other virtues, to those who humbly pray for it. Prayer is the resource of those, who, though they do good, would fain do better; who are never content and think it a defect not to be perfect. These receive great light from God, and, as we see in the Saints, they acquire an incredible prudence, meekness, and dexterity in dealing with souls. Take courage, therefore, and do not falter in so holy a career. I entertain great hopes when

you inform me that your pious aims and desires do not end there, for I know that charity has no limits.

With all the greater confidence do I approach the subject of the Society at Turin. Not long ago, the excellent Marchese d' Azeglio wrote me a long letter in the name of the Society and sent me a parcel of books all brought out by it. It is certainly a most excellent and useful work. As you know, we agreed to speak to Traversi whilst he was at Rovereto. For the rest, whatever we attempt our zeal must be *fervent*, *constant* and *enlightened*. Without fervour we shall never accomplish anything great, and without *constancy* we shall never overcome the obstacles presented by the wicked and the ignorant, the world and the devil. Finally if our charity be *not according to knowledge*, it will neither be pleasing to God nor useful to our fellow men; it could not in fact be called charity but would only be presumption, an empty name, a deceit of the enemy. If we mature the thing by prayer and according to the light given us by God and the advice of prudent persons; if we second and do not anticipate the Divine designs, and are indifferent to all but the fulfilment of the will of God, seeking His interest rather than our own success, then I trust that in the end our efforts will be rewarded. Pray, meditate; then write and tell me what you would like me to say to the Provveditore. I will lay the whole matter before him and we will see what this enlightened and pious man will say.

With warmest regard,

Your friend,

A. R.

VII.

TO GIULIO FRANCHI.

On the subject of the priesthood and the necessary dispositions.

Rovereto,

May 7th, 1825.

I received your dear letter several days ago, but have not found time to write to you. To-day at length you shall have an answer. The decision of which you speak is a serious and important matter. You know already, being well instructed in your religion, that a call to the priesthood is one of the greatest graces God can bestow. You know that no one can assume this honour to himself, unless he be called as Aaron was. You know the duties incumbent on one who feels himself so called, the necessity of holy fear, of diffidence, of constant prayer; how he should mortify all his senses and listen in solitude to the voice of Him who calls now clearly, now less distinctly; and that finally he must submit the matter in all its bearings to his superiors, by means of whom God is wont ordinarily to manifest His will. In particular, he must *bid a lasting farewell to a worldly life or thoughts of the world*, and, by means of tender piety and assiduity in the Divine service, with fidelity in avoiding every danger or distraction, endeavour to merit so great a favour. I have just said this is one of the greatest of all graces, according to God, and I say so advisedly because in the eyes of the world it is certainly not so. From the first moment when he receives the tonsure the cleric renounces all earthly interests by pronouncing these words: DOMINUS PARS HAEREDITATIS MEÆ: *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance*. Hence we have nothing to hope for in this

world but labours and sufferings, for the love of Jesus Christ ; and were we to expect anything else we should be false to the spirit of our profession. You must consider the step in its true light before you receive the tonsure and consecrate yourself to God. For your own sake, do not deceive yourself by proposing to yourself some human motive, such as that of being able to complete your studies. Such a course would render you guilty of a grave crime in the sight of God and you could not hope to receive a blessing from Him. Woe to him who trifles with holy things ; God is jealous of His honour and will avenge it. If you have really come to this important determination, it is you yourself, not I, who ought to announce it to your father ; he will doubtless be pleased. But if you have let yourself be deluded by any false motives, think better of it, for heaven's sake, for you could not hope to succeed. Farewell ! May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you !

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

VIII.

TO BARTOLOMEO STOFELLA AT ROVERETO.

He encourages his friend to be cheerful and patient.

Milan,

July 16th, 1826.

There were many things in your letter which gave me pleasure, but I was grieved to find you still harping sadly on the lines :

I love to roam alone in pensive mood
And slowly pace thro' dreary solitude.

Ah ! pray do not seek always to shun the path beaten by your fellow men ! It is in the society of your fellows that you will find comfort when you are in affliction. I mean that you will be cheered and encouraged by prudent counsels, I do not ask you to seek distraction in the Babel of idle tongues, as confusing to the mind as it is deafening to the ear. The relief which one seems to derive from the world leaves the mind more clouded and miserable than before ; very different is the consolation shed on the soul by the tranquil ray of truth. This ray shines down upon the surrounding night and dispels its darkness. It first restores our peace of mind and enables us to see how confused all things are in the general gloom ; we then discern how they may best be brought into order, and thus are calmed the mounting billows of the stormy sea.

Yes, I understand, you are not happy in your present life. The hard work and long hours of teaching, and the weariness which follows when school is over—anxiety about your family and your own ill-health—all these

things combine to distress and trouble you. Yet, learn to be patient, make an offering of your troubles to God and the evil will thus be transformed into good. How marvellous are the consolations of our divine religion! How rich it is in noble thoughts, ardent affections and supernatural means of strengthening our feeble hearts, of transforming us wretched men almost into Angels, who know not what it is to suffer! The more deeply I study the subject the more fully I am convinced of this. Religion is a friend, a compassionate mother who strews flowers over all our thorns and soothes the bitterness of every misfortune. She enthrones herself in our hearts, and thence like the sun diffuses a peaceful and all-pervading light over the soul, transforming it thereby into a very firmament of light. She takes hold of man and directs his thoughts towards eternity. This one thought of Eternity, well considered, reveals to us the little value we should set on earthly things. Eternity it is that reproaches us for having turned our affections towards some ephemeral object, when we should have reserved them for what is imperishable; it makes us regret even the least portion of time lost, not to be regained. Well does this teacher make me understand why the Saints charge with madness a world that strives so hard to possess things which must soon be abandoned for ever.

It is indeed madness for the sake of such trifles to nourish enmity, to wage war, and slaughter our fellow-men. It is madness to endure heat and cold for such things, to wear oneself out in constant toil, labour and distress; for things, let me repeat, which man must soon give up for ever, when he will return naked to that earth whence he was taken, without having done anything for *Eternity*. If this be not deplorable madness what else can be? God grants us the time and means to collect treasures which endure for ever; but we make no account of them. We prefer to waste all the precious time of life; we are not afraid to find ourselves at the hour of death, destitute of the merits with which we might have been enriched. We

are not afraid to appear, devoid of virtue, at the tribunal of an almighty and most just God, there to render an account of all the graces we have lost, all the invitations we have despised, all our ingratitude to Him who has lavished upon us His most abundant mercies. We know that the present life is the season of mercy; we know that the future is reserved for justice, and yet how heedlessly we allow the years of life, the time for working out our salvation, to pass away! Thus we draw nearer and nearer to the hour of reckoning. What folly and madness! It would be incredible if experience did not prove it to be a fact.

Pardon me, dear Stofella. When I began this letter I had no intention of saying all this; but I have been led on to pour out all my grief for the deplorable blindness of men. Pray that our Lord may dissipate the blindness of my own soul. Happy shall we be if by becoming foolish in the esteem of the world we learn to be truly wise according to our Lord Jesus Christ! He knows how I desire it; but when shall I receive this inestimable grace? Do you obtain it for me. Let us pray together for the attainment of our end, for when this is secured all is gained. Farewell!

A. R.

IX.

TO DON GIUSEPPE BRUNATI, AT BRESCIA.

Congratulations to his friend on entering the Society of Jesus. On submission of the understanding.

Milan,

April 9th, 1827.

The news contained in your letter is a pleasure rather than a surprise. How could I be surprised knowing that your heart was burning with the love of God, for whom it was created? To my mind, it is not more marvellous to see a man imbued with such sentiments drawn to religious life, than to see fish attracted by the bait, or a bird by its prey. *Be strong and of good courage* since our Lord so loves you as to create in your heart these holy desires. Yes, yes, nothing is more delightful than to flee from the world and take refuge in the safe harbour of Religion, sheltered there from the stormy waves. Nothing is more desirable than to make a solemn consecration of ourselves to our Lord and Spouse. Blessed are you in the espousals to which our Lord deigns to raise you.

But, dear friend, can I conceal any longer from you the secret I have cherished so long in my own heart? Not after you have given me your own confidence. Well then, you must know that I have come to a similar determination. I have resolved to quit the world and enter religion. You will want to know if I also am going to don the livery of Ignatius. I so love this livery that I could cover it with kisses: it is the livery which, if I may so speak, belongs to Christ's Pretorian guards. God, however, calls me to something else, and you know how attentively His voice must be listened

to and how faithfully obeyed. I am called to something else as I said, but I am called to religion. In belonging to Ignatius you do not cease to be of Jesus, to whom also I trust I shall belong, and therefore we shall be in the service of the same King, and in Him we shall love each other as fellow soldiers under the same banner.

Perhaps you would like to know more. When I see you I will tell you all; for the present let this suffice. Not however that I know the time appointed by our Lord for carrying out my intention, any more than you do in your own case. Let us pray together and pray unceasingly, for from Him alone all must come. I repeat we must pray.

You wish to know my opinion with regard to the duty of subjecting one's own judgment entirely to the authority of another, as is the practice in the Society of Jesus. St. Ignatius was well aware of the strength which the Society would acquire, if he established in it the greatest uniformity possible, as well in matter of doctrine as in other things. I do not deny that serious difficulties may arise in some cases. Yet generally speaking, the submission of the understanding is the first requisite for a good religious. All other virtues, though they be heroic, can be of no advantage to him, unless he knows how to obtain the mastery over himself in this particular, so as to sacrifice his own views to the authority of his Superiors. This it is which, in a body composed of many members, preserves unity and harmony. Now in ordinary cases this is not impossible; as a rule the things on which difference of opinion arises are not self-evident. Not having evidence on our side, therefore, it is simply our self-love which makes us regard our own opinion as unquestionable. We should regard it therefore as doubtful. From the moment that we are in doubt about our own opinion, it is no longer difficult to accept that of others by preferring their judgment to one's own. Would not anyone with a really humble opinion of himself act thus naturally?

I confess, notwithstanding, that I should find great difficulty, in two cases (which however seem to me very

rare) and these are: (1) If setting aside all self-love, I find in my opinion such evidence of truth as there is for instance, in a mathematical demonstration. (2) If I find the opinion I am desired to embrace evidently false.

In these two cases, I cannot, I ought not to assent in my heart. It is my duty to retain my own opinion, without however causing a disturbance in the Community if I do not succeed in convincing my superiors. These cases are, as I have said, extremely rare. It is almost always self-love which gives to our opinions a greater degree of certainty than really belongs to them. A man who has become truly humble and *foolish for Christ's sake* seldom finds himself in such a position; but it is not altogether impossible, and I admit that it would be somewhat embarrassing. In a word, the Religious should be predisposed to lay aside his own opinion and embrace that of others, but his humility and contempt of self should always be accompanied by a tender and unswerving love of truth in obedience and in charity. Adieu!

A. R.

X.

TO THE SAME.

On submission of the understanding and indifference.

Milan,

May 4th, 1827.

I fully agree with your solution of the difficult case which would arise in the event of a conflict between one's duty to obedience and duty to the truth. But there is even more truth in the remark that we must firmly trust God will not permit such conflicts to arise. This is a great principle which cannot lead us astray. Confidence in God is what alone can give us assurance as to many things with regard to which we should otherwise be always in a state of doubt and suspense. The necessity of entrusting ourselves entirely to God has been brought home to us by Jesus Christ, as when He taught us to pray that we be not *led into temptation*. Only God can preserve us from those occasions which are to be found even in religion, though much more in the world, occasions of danger to the strongest virtue. Hence we find Jesus Christ Himself saying: "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." The same may be said of all those who are united to Christ and trust in Him. We are travellers on this earth and we know not whither we are going, whether into places full of dangers and difficulties or into those that are easy and safe. Confidence in God is the only thing that can fully reassure us in the midst of our uncertainty, and this consideration should in my opinion dispel all anxiety on the point in question.

The rule laid down by St. Ignatius is, however, not as absolute as some suppose, for he adds to it *as far as*

possible (quoad eius fieri poterit). Thus in the 1st Chapter of the Third Part, speaking of the care to be taken of the Novices' spiritual advancement, he says : *Let all the brothers as far as possible, hold the same sentiments and language, as the Apostle teaches.* So also in the last Chapter of the Constitutions, where he teaches the way in which the whole body of the Society is to be maintained in vigour and increased, he touches on agreement in matters of doctrine, but always with the saving clause, *as far as this is possible.* It is of course true that all this moderation would be of no avail under Superiors who were too exacting ; but these difficulties are not to be feared through God's mercy. Even if He allowed danger to arise, He would give the religious who trusted in Him the means of deliverance from all embarrassment. In fine I believe we need have no misgivings about entering the Religious State, since this is an act well pleasing to God, who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity.

As for what you say about the Benedictines, I can only advise you to weigh the matter well and make it a subject of earnest prayer. The last article of the Second Part of the *Summa* has always been a great favourite of mine. St. Thomas there proves that as regards entering into religion or not, it is not necessary to consult even one's friends ; because it is a thing so evidently good in itself that no counsel is required ; but counsel is necessary in order to ascertain which among the various Religious Institutes is the one most suited to us. Read this article, for it seems to me full of the spirit of God, and I am sure you will find it as consoling as I have done.

For the rest do not allow yourself to be influenced by inclinations or aversions. Do you think yourself unqualified for preaching or for the confessional ? Leave that to your Superiors to decide, and place yourself on your part in a state of perfect indifference so as to be ready even to preach, to hear confessions, or to do anything else for which you are disinclined or unfitted by habit. It seems to me that the first and principal requisite in order to know

the will of God and make a good choice, is to establish oneself in a state of complete and perfect *indifference* to all things. This virtue so much recommended by the Saints, removes all impediments to Divine inspirations. By this virtue alone is the heart enabled to hear the softest whisper from our Lord. Continue to love me in Him and commend me to Him in your prayers.

A. R.

XI.

TO THE SAME AT BRESCIA.

Fr. Caraffa's three Subjects of Meditation.

Milan,

June 3rd, 1827.

What a good opportunity of going to Rome with our friend Ostini! I should envy you if my time had come. You are indeed fortunate, for at the end of your journey you hope to find not only the *Gesù*, but *Jesus*. Ah! this is indeed our all. At least it should be so, and then our union would be perfect.

A few days ago I was reading a beautiful passage in the life of Father Caraffa, the seventh general of the Society of Jesus. He used to say he had to meditate on three letters, one *black*, another *red*, and the third *white*; by which he meant to say:—his own sins, the passion of our Saviour, and the glory of the blessed. It seems to me that all subjects of Christian meditation may be reduced to these three points. By the black letter we come to know ourselves, and are enabled to direct our attention to the purification of our souls; by the red we are moved to imitate Christ in all that is painful to nature; but with the white, we are enabled to overcome discouragement and to bear the desolation of

spirit, which sorrow for our sins and other sufferings are apt to cause us; imitating in this also Christ, our Lord, "who having joy set before Him chose the cross."

I am pleased to hear you are publishing a dissertation on Fleury; it will be a good antidote to the venom of the evil one. Commend me, I beg of you, to our Lord. I do not fail to pray for you as you desire. But you will allow me to see you, to bid you farewell, before starting on the long journey, will you not? I hope so at least. Farewell.
A. R.

XII.

TO THE SAME AT BRESCIA.

He encourages his friend to be faithful to his vocation.

Milan,

July 3rd, 1827.

I have not failed to thank God for the graces He has bestowed upon you in calling you to a life of perfection. The consent obtained from your Bishop sets a seal upon your vocation. How many obligations are contracted towards God by one who has received such special graces! The man who appreciates the greatness of this gift cannot but feel confused and, as it were, annihilated by the knowledge that he has nothing whatever to offer in return. You are fortunate in appreciating as you do this humiliating dignity. How delighted I shall be if you will let me see you once more before your departure! I await you with impatience; come; do not tear yourself away from me—perhaps for a long time—without letting me see you.

Thank you for the Mass you said for my good cousin. Our Lord has, I firmly trust, taken him to Himself. As you say, He wished to give us a lesson of the nothingness

of all that is human. Such lessons are given to us daily, if we only knew how to profit by them.

I shall very likely be going in a few days to the birth-place of St. Charles, and perhaps even to Mount Varallo, where he prepared himself by devout meditation for death or rather for a second birth. I wish you could accompany me; it would be delightful if we could make this little excursion together before our separation. Wherever you may be I shall love you in the hearts of Jesus and Mary where friends are inseparable and friendship immortal. *In osculo sancto.*

A. R.

XIII.

TO GIOVANNI PADULLI AT VERONA.

Natural affections must be sanctified by charity. Christian life reduced to two points, self-knowledge which produces holy fear, and the knowledge of God which produces Christian courage.

Rovereto,

September 7th, 1827.

You have done me a real kindness in enabling me to make acquaintance with your sons. I derived great pleasure from my brief conversation with them, by reason of the good sense and feeling they exhibited, and especially the love and reverence with which they spoke of their father. I can only hope that the Lord will give you the happiness of seeing them grow up good and useful men. I beg you to remember me to them and to assure them they have in me a friend who loves them in the Lord and who is deeply interested in their welfare.

The tender affection which you entertain for your

children is natural, and will become the means of securing their true happiness, for this natural affection is sanctified as I perceive by something nobler, that is by the love of our Lord Jesus Crucified in whom we should love all things. The love of Jesus sanctifies and directs all natural love, so that we may not be blinded by it but rather enabled to do real good to others. Human and natural affections, of themselves, can never lead us to what is good ; but the love which is governed by the love of Jesus knows how to make use of human things in order to attain to that true good which alone is lasting.

You do well to place your whole self at the feet of Jesus Crucified. At the foot of the cross you will receive strength to discharge the duties of your state and accomplish your holy vocation. Here you will obtain light to guide, in the path of holiness, the children whom the Lord has given you, until He Himself crowns His work, for He never abandons those who trust in Him.

You feel a certain fear and timidity arising from the consciousness of your weakness. And in truth as long as we look only at ourselves we have reason to fear. Wretched, indeed, is man abandoned to himself! But let us give thanks to our Lord, as you rightly say, because when we surrender ourselves to God He gives us His own courage and His own strength. I can only exhort you to impress this truth ever more deeply on your mind. The whole study of the Christian life is comprised in these two points: the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God. These produce two opposite effects. Self-knowledge brings with it fear and discouragement, whilst the knowledge of God, on the contrary, infuses unbounded hope and courage. We must be careful not to let one of these feelings exist without the other.

Therefore, dear friend, let us fear and tremble, but at the same time have full confidence. We must remember that we wrong God no less by presumption than by distrust. Pusillanimity is no less unbecoming to a Christian than temerity. Are we not happy in this, that we not

only may but must have courage in all the circumstances of life? O unspeakable goodness of God! He takes offence at our being disheartened; He exacts from us a courage as great (if that were possible) as His goodness: an infinite courage. Who could impose this obligation except God, a God infinitely good and infinitely powerful? Let us then in our distress say with the Apostle: "If God be with us, who is against us?" But, adds the Apostle, how are we to know that God is on our side? He answers: Has not the heavenly Father given us a manifest sign inasmuch as He did not spare His own Son but gave Him for us all? Has He not with His own Son given us all other things? If He has given us what is more, can He refuse what is less? Will He not give us all the graces of which we have need? Assuredly He will: you do well to place yourself and all you have at the foot of the cross; since according to the Apostle's teaching this is the pledge that has been given to us by the Heavenly Father and the sure guarantee that He will also grant us all other things; nay, it is the fount of the graces we need.

Therefore, be of good courage and have no fear for the future. Banish every doubt and discouragement by one glance at the Crucifix, our strength and our wisdom. Nay, you should make it a matter of conscience to have courage, because the Christian who trusts in Jesus rests secure in His keeping. Let us therefore not incur the reproach which Christ addressed to His disciples when they were still weak in virtue: "Men of little faith why do you doubt?" All things work together unto good for those who thus surrender themselves to Him who governs all things. Let us not be scandalized nor hesitate, but let us act freely, with holy liberty, with faith.

When you are in Rome I will give you particulars of my plans. This is enough for the present. Let us live from day to day, joyfully, in prayer and thanksgiving. May Mary our Mother assist us!

A. R.

XIV.

TO GIOVANNI BOSELLI AT MILAN.

God draws good out of our faults.

Rovereto,

October 17th, 1827.

Thank you for your kind remembrance of me. I am grateful also to our friend Signor Francesco. He tells me he is engrossed with gold and gems (gioie)* as if he would suggest a pleasing contrast between his external occupations and the state of his soul, the favourite symbol of which I well know is the cross, a cross of wood rather than of gold. I gather from your letter that you share his sentiments. Ah, what a treasure this is! How precious is this wood of the Cross! May our Lord enable us to understand its inexhaustible wealth! Therein we shall find all wisdom, all perfection, all good, the fulness of joy and a joy which does not pass away. And if we cannot immediately secure this treasure we possess it in that hope which confoundeth not; because it is founded in faith.

What you say about shortcomings in our little practices of devotion, should humble without terrifying us; indeed we may draw from this a motive of encouragement. Our Lord tolerates this effect of our nothingness in order that we may see with our own eyes that we are not capable of lifting a straw; for these exercises of ours are but as nothing if we compare them with what holy men have done for God. I, who am by far the most imperfect, understand and feel this; and a voice tells me in my heart that God in His Goodness will always treat us in this way until we have learnt in this school to despise ourselves,

* Francesco Bonetti was a jeweller by profession.

in a word to know ourselves. Let us beg of our Lord to give us this precious knowledge of ourselves, joined with the knowledge of His goodness lest we be overwhelmed with dismay. Jesus will enlighten our mind with a double ray of light by which we shall discern the two pivots on which all knowledge turns: our nothingness, His omnipotence. This will lead us to the complete sacrifice of our whole selves, because, recognizing our own nothingness, we shall arrogate nothing to ourselves but consecrate all to Jesus. Then shall we be at peace, then external things will cease to disturb us because we shall rest upon truth, because nothingness can neither be disturbed nor mortified by men. Nothingness is incapable of doing anything, nor can He who is All stand in need of it. When we shall have become as nothing to ourselves there will be no more agitation or anxiety, no more precipitancy or over-eagerness. We shall then allow God to draw from our nothingness all that He pleases, and we shall always be ready to obey His creative will, which all things obey. Let us learn from them to know His voice and not resist it. O happy passivity whereby a man like plastic wax is easily moulded and impressed by the spirit of God! I mention these things because of my own defects, in the hope that God will forgive me, for I am indeed the most imperfect of men.

I conclude entreating you to pray that God may provide for the wants of Holy Church and give infinite glory to His Son, making Him reign over all men and all things. Prayer, prayer, prayer: that is what we want. We know the means; Jesus has told us what it is. If we fail to make use of it, whose fault is it? I embrace you in our Lord in whom I hope that we shall be made perfect. May Mary our Mother obtain for us this grace!

A. R.

XV.

TO THE MARQUIS ERMES VISCONTI AT MILAN.

On the danger of reading books tainted with heretical errors.

Milan,

January 28th, 1828.

During our conversation yesterday evening I expressed the opinion that "in reading books containing errors in faith (with the requisite permission from authority) there is no danger provided the intention be good and upright." On reflection I perceive that statement will not hold as a general maxim and cannot, I think, be applied to the case in question.

My conscience, and the friendship and sincere regard which I entertain for you, constrain me to make this frank avowal this morning.

Our faith is the basis of the whole fabric of religion ; a Christian is bound to take every precaution for keeping his faith pure and unalloyed.

We must not let errors against the Faith sink into our mind, even though the error should be *material* only and not *formal*. This may happen without actual malice by merely reading a contaminated book.

The danger is greater when there is question of subtle and specious errors, as there are in the book you mention. Its being written in a pious strain makes it the more pernicious, because the error itself wears the semblance of piety, and its real nature escapes notice, concealed as it is by fair words. Meanwhile it remains in the mind and may produce evil effects in the course of time. It is the cockle which the enemy sows among the wheat.

My dear Visconti, I trust that I am not scrupulous, but in matters of faith laxity is fatal.

The day may come when what you read now might cause you great disquietude. We all have need of peace of mind, and you in a special manner.

You are wont humbly to speak of yourself as only a beginner in the study of Christian doctrine. If then without necessity or the call of duty you take to reading books in which good is mingled with evil, truth with falsehood, what will come of it? The result will be that the moment will come when you will feel the necessity of testing the opinions you have imbibed. As truths and falsehoods will be confused together in your mind, you will be obliged in order to sift them to enter into theological questions which will bring you into trouble. How much better it would be to avoid the necessity of being one day involved in distasteful and dangerous controversies!

Permit me also, dear Visconti, to beg and entreat you through the high esteem and sincere love I have for you, to hold aloof, especially at the present time, from all parties, and to be content with the sound doctrine of the Catholic Church. This is the doctrine of God: all else is the doctrine of men. What is it that we have in view in our study of religion? Is it our salvation or the gratification of curiosity? Salvation is found in the true doctrine of the Church: curiosity and self-love find pleasure in the tenets of parties.

The tenets of a party are always tainted by the vices of the men who form that party. The doctrine of the Church is pure, it does not produce confusion and distress of mind because it does not rouse the passions.

Have we not devout writers who have gained general esteem in the Church and who are considered to be trustworthy guides? Why then trouble yourself about authors whose doctrine does not come from God, though their words may be full of unction? Have not heretics in all ages deceived the faithful by fair words and an appearance of piety and rigour?

I entreat you, dear Visconti, to weigh well these considerations which I submit to your good sense. I have thought myself in duty bound to do so, and I hope you will regard my frankness as a token of the interest I take in your welfare.

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

XVI.

TO LUIGI DI APPOLLONIA AT PADUA.

He advises him to make use of the study of physical science to raise his mind to the Creator.

Domodossola,

February 27th, 1828.

Business and indisposition prevent me from writing to you as often as I could wish; but I cannot leave your kind letter without at least a few lines in reply. I am delighted to see that you know how to rise from the study of nature to the worship of the Creator. Happy are you in ascending by this ladder! How arid and desolating is the investigation of material things if it be conducted without reference to the Creative Intelligence which regulates, preserves and gives life to the material world that it may serve to one only end! All nature then is a hymn of praise; the heavens and the earth, the very stones and finally man himself declare in concert the praises of God. How marvellous, as you say, is the formation of the human body, how wonderfully its unity is preserved amid the mobility of the various parts! Most wonderful is the phenomenon of *life*, the greatest of all natural phenomena and at the same time the most mysterious. It forms the subject of the ravings of foolish men, while the faithful Christian feels his heart touched and his mind filled with

light as he worships. How wise are the laws of life : strange are its gradations, marvellous its vicissitudes !

I beg you to preserve as a priceless treasure the sentiments which do you so much honour. As God is the final end of all your studies you cannot fail to acquire, not merely honour, but imperishable glory. You ask for some good advice, and I cannot refrain from speaking openly to you. I should advise you then to combine prayer with study. In the beginning it is painful but as you continue the task becomes full of joy ; humble and simple prayer elevates and enlightens the mind.

If you are writing to your brother say all that you know to be contained in the heart of your friend,

A. R.

XVII.

TO SEBASTIANO DI APPOLLONIA AT UDINE.

He bids him make sure of his vocation to the religious life.

Calvario,

Wednesday in Holy Week, 1828.

I reply to you at once according to your wish and my own desire. However, I have nothing to say on what you call the "great question ;" I must have an answer myself before I can give you one. I come now to the most important point : your state of life and mine. I certainly cannot say : Leave your nets and follow me ; this should rather be said to me. But if Another should speak these words, make no delay, do His will not your own, leave your nets and follow that call. If there are difficulties to overcome look them in the face, and He who calls will suggest to you how they may be settled, not at once perhaps but in His own time and way. In the meantime listen attentively to the Voice and do not silence it. I do not

bid you come, for if I did I should be answerable for the future, whereas I cannot even guarantee the present. If Another says: *Come*, He will be surety for what He says. I receive a person who presents himself as one sent by God, otherwise I could not receive him. If you come I shall be delighted.

This mountain, in its solitude and with its memorials of the Passion seems to me a very paradise of sorrow. The scene is well calculated to raise our thoughts to eternity, to Him who dwells in eternity, to the bosom of His mercy. Here we may gaze on the world below, realizing more fully that its gold is but dross, its pomps vain, its pleasures akin to bitterness; here we remember that we are no longer our own but God's; here we understand our own nothingness and seem to hear the words of the dread judgment which awaits us all. This is my object in staying here: that I may know myself better and may courageously explore the depths and the darkness of my iniquities by the light of eternal Truth. Can you doubt that it would be delightful to have the company of a friend?

You say you will come if I have need of you. Well, God must tell you, not I, whether I have need of you or not. Pray to Him, as I also do, to obtain this light and then follow its guidance bravely and promptly; but let your prayer be made earnestly and in the spirit of resignation to God's will. Be generous towards God, as generous as it is in the heart of man to be, generous as the widow offering her two mites. Furthermore our prayer must be made perfect in patience and long suffering, for they are blessed who wait for our Lord and the precious moments known only to Him. Ah! dear Don Sebastiano, it is from the Altar that our Lord will tell you if I have need of you; there He will tell you, too, that we both have need of Him. Certainly I feel this need most keenly. May He become our life and our being; then our life will be no longer our own but His, and then we shall feel indeed how much we need Him. O happy consciousness of our indigence! And how should the Saints be happy

if not in feeling their entire dependence on God, from whom they continually receive all they have and are? Is this what you mean by the knowledge of the Absolute, which you say you are trying to acquire? You are indeed happy if you devote yourself to that science which is the joy of the Blessed. But I will not take up more of your time. It is agreed that you should take counsel with our Lord and do what He shall inspire you. I on my part shall welcome you if you come as one sent by God. For the rest be without solicitude. As to Maurizio I trust I may say

“Smarii sol dunque, non perdetti il figlio.”*

A. R.

XVIII.

TO GIUSEPPE BRUNATI AT BRESCIA.

*We must be faithful to God though we cannot strictly speaking
be generous towards Him.*

Calvario,

Easter Monday, 1828.

I wrote to you on the 3rd of March from this place which is so dear to me, and addressed the letter to Rome, not knowing that you were on your way home again. You must take this letter in lieu of the former, which has probably miscarried, and as a reply to yours of the 2nd of April. I was gratified to find that I still hold a place in your remembrance, for I almost thought you had forgotten me; but the same letter brought the painful tidings of your mother's death and your own grief. I will indeed commend her to God in my feeble prayers, for to the living at least comfort is given through the prayers of their friends. It is your turn now to experience this, as it was

* I have but *missed* not *lost* my son.

mine not long since, when the friend of my youth was taken away at an early age. I will say no more of your great sorrow, for to a man versed in Holy Scripture I could say nothing that he could not teach me.

I will tell you about myself instead. In the first place, you must know that some months ago at Milan I was so dangerously ill that the coming of the Spouse seemed imminent. The time, however, had not come, and after some months' illness, during which I had the mortification of being compelled to abandon my most cherished studies, I am much stronger and almost restored to health. How good God is! The very mortification of foregoing my studies was I believe a special mercy on the part of our Lord, who sees farther than we do. It is needful for us sometimes to realize the mortality of all that is human, that snapping asunder of human projects, which brings a man face to face with himself. I must confess it cost me not a little to give up my attachment to my studies and to thinking; it was no easy thing to bring myself to a state of indifference with regard to everything but the love and service of God. I am far indeed from having reached that point. My God, Thou knowest how encompassed I am with infirmity. But I think I understand better the necessity of attaining to this holy indifference, this losing of self in God. My desire to attain this state, or at least of preparing for it, has led me to retire to this Sacred Mount which is full of the mysteries of the Man-God, our Divine Model, who has taught us that the height of virtue consists in voluntary humiliation and that in patience we shall possess our souls.

I am living here in solitude, without ever descending to the plain, and I hardly ever see any one except the people who come to me for Confession. I shall not hurry back to Milan, as I wish to inhale this air so laden with mournful and salutary memories. I am thinking of spending Whitsuntide here, if God does not dispose otherwise.

As to you, I trust that, to use your own expression,

you will not recede, knowing well that he who has put his hand to the plough should not even look back. I do indeed urge you, as I do myself, to obey with all promptness and generosity the voice of God, for it is precious and is not always heard a second time. Ah! let us not be niggardly with God! Can we ever be said to be *generous* with God, whatever we may do to honour Him? Rather let us say *we are unprofitable servants*, even when we shall have done as great things as the Apostles did. And until then what can we say? Nothing, it seems to me, but we must be humble and full of fear.

I was desirous to know more in detail concerning you, and indeed I flattered myself that our friendship gave me a right almost to your confidence. Perhaps, however, you did not wish to communicate in a letter what you intended to tell me by word of mouth. When it will please God for us to meet I cannot tell, for at present I really live from day to day, with greater happiness and peace of mind than I have ever enjoyed in so doing before. Oh! the goodness of God! Who can find words to thank Him for the benefits which He heaps upon us even in the time of chastisement! I entreat you to join your prayers to mine, that we may both of us be strengthened to obey in all things and not be ungrateful to the goodness of our God.

A. R.

XIX.

TO GIOVANNI BOSELLI AT MILAN.

On discretion in the exercise of Charity.

Calvario,

April 14th, 1828.

Since we can no longer see each other as we used to do at Milan, at least let us meet by letter. The desire of such intercourse makes me more eager than before to write to you, especially because certain passages in your letter call for some remarks. Assuredly, as you say, I wish us all to be children of one Mother, Charity: this has always been my most earnest desire as I mentioned to you in conversation. Then you add: "It is necessary to decide upon the road to be followed, so that if anyone asks: *What am I to do? Quid faciam?* he may be able to judge whether he is called to this kind of life or another." This is true: and I had no other object in view when I chose this solitude and passed Lent on this hill dedicated to the Passion of the Redeemer, than to take counsel with God and receive the manifestation of His adorable will. He will certainly not leave us in darkness. Dear friend, I tell you truthfully that in my present course of action I am doing what He requires of me. What is this? you will ask. It is impossible to explain in a letter. Were I to tell you in general terms that it is simply to entrust myself to the care of Divine Providence, to live in humility and peace, with no other desire than that of justice, without inquietude, and to be constant and active in well doing, you would think I was telling you nothing of what you wanted to know. As for your remark that when there is a

question of choice in works of charity it is prudent to select the lowliest, I quite agree with you, *provided it be lawful to choose*, provided the Lord does not indicate His will to the contrary, provided we do not attach ourselves to what is low or what is high and do not even pride ourselves on a lowly station, provided, finally, that we understand that in this world there is neither high nor low. I feel that the will of God concerning me is that I should seek nothing and, as far as it is possible, refuse nothing, but offer myself to Him without reserve and without anticipating His will or, so to speak, imposing my own will on Him, in short that I should be entirely subject to Him. Would that my will were entirely united to His! I assure you that if asked whether I am willing to perform the humblest offices of charity, I should not dare to say yes without adding: provided I do not seek them but they are offered to me by Providence by means of external circumstances. Were I asked if I desire to refuse the nobler works of charity offered to me by Providence by means of external circumstances I should not dare to say yes, for I should not like to refuse even these. Thus charity alone, but *charity according to God's will*, is what I desire above all things, in order that I may not do my own will under the pretence of charity, but the will of God, which is charity itself.

But, as I said before, it is impossible in a letter to give you a clear idea of what I mean, though it is contained in what I have said. Nevertheless the Society will retain as you say the lineaments of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, only that its members will be men, and not laymen but priests. The charity exercised by women is necessarily less extensive than that exercised by men, and the same may be said of laymen in comparison with priests. Jesus Christ shows His will to all. Let everyone fulfil it: woman, layman, and priest. Each one has his own sphere of action, which he must not determine for himself, but remain indifferent. God determines it for each one, and when He has spoken indifference ceases. You do well to

conclude by saying : " Let us remain at the feet of Jesus Crucified and He will not suffer us to be deceived." Let each one wait for the Lord in peace and joy and the doing of good works, with contentment and long suffering.

I am pleased to hear your Conferences continue. Animate one another to fervour, especially in devotion to our Redeemer and to Our Lady of Sorrows. Let us love each other in the Lord, to whom be all honour and glory.

A. R.

XX.

TO GIULIO PADULLI AT MILAN.

On the desire which Christians feel to be in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Monte Calvario,

April 21st, 1828.

I thank God for having restored you to health. Mellerio assures me you are now quite convalescent; I understand, however, from the amount of blood-letting which was necessary, that my fears were not groundless. Now you must take care not to go back again but pass from convalescence to perfect health; I am looking forward to hear of your complete recovery. It is too soon for you to occupy yourself with such an arduous subject as philosophy, so I will wait till you are fully restored to strength before I touch upon it.

You are quite right in desiring to be once more in Church in the presence of our Divine Love, and should any one reprove this desire you might answer in the words of Job : *Doth not the ear discern words and the palate taste the meat ?*" For one who has these bodily senses it is impossible not to have the corresponding sensations. Even so, he who has a spiritual sense, a thing which is

more rare and sublime, but which all Christians possess who love Jesus Christ, he, I say, cannot but feel pain at being separated from his Lord and deprived of Him. It is true that with our heart at least we may seek and find Jesus everywhere; but our Lord, who understood us because He had made us, condescended to make His presence not only real but corporeal also. He was pleased to take unto Himself a body that should be like our own, so that our dead bodies may be restored to life by contact with His living body which can never again be subject to death. And there is a sense peculiar to Christians, which gives us a perception of this new happiness and makes us expect it eagerly. This spiritual sense it is which makes it impossible for you not to desire to be in the Church before the Tabernacle, holding converse with our Lord as you were accustomed to do. But you will soon be able to go there again, if you have not already been at the time I am writing, to return thanks to our Lord and pray for yourself and your friend.

Mellerio wrote home that when he was at Rho he thought of you, or rather (I cannot refrain from mentioning it) of us, and hoped we should all be of one mind and heart. Assuredly your dear Don Giovanni made a fourth in that union which is, I firmly trust, acceptable to God. I beg you to tell him when you write how much attached to him we are.

Be of good courage, and do your best to get well. Adieu!

A. R.

XXI.

TO SAMUELE BIAVA AT MILAN.

On the devout study of Holy Scripture as a means of learning humility.

Domodossola,

April 25th, 1828.

You have beautifully expressed a great truth in those words: Humility controls and strengthens those who have faith. So indeed it is; and blessed are they who feel it to be so. The inmost consciousness of our nothingness causes us to feel the need we have of the Almighty and sets us on the road which leads to Him who is our strength. The confidence engendered by humility is full of vigour, and the meanest things of this world have through its means become the strongest, and the humble have been exalted above the proud. I advise you to read and become familiar with the Holy Scripture, in that spirit of humility and generosity which has been bestowed on you by our Lord. The Scriptures are one continual lesson of humility; they teach it in all sorts of ways, by means of the incidents narrated, by the style, by the very words. St. Augustine, when he was still impregnated with the spirit of the world, read the Scriptures and despised them. "I did not know," he said afterwards, "that the Scriptures assume diverse forms: that for the great they become little, while for the little they increase with them to immeasurable greatness. It (the Scripture) became great with the little ones, but I scorned to be little and being swollen with pride thought myself great."

I often think of you as though you were present and discussing questions. Write to me and believe me to be all yours.

A. R.

XXII.

TO N. N.

Suggestions on the control of the imagination.

Calvario,
July 24th, 1828.

My advice concerning the matter referred to in your communication is as follows :

1st. With regard to the convulsions of weeping or laughter by which you are assailed in moments of devotion, pay no attention to it, for it is but a trifle ; and do not spend time in enquiring whether it proceeds from the spirit of evil or from God. There is no advantage in your knowing the cause, as long as no evil results come of it. The fact that your health is somewhat impaired as you tell me, is sufficient to explain these things, for such effects are often produced by nervousness.

2nd. You tell me you are fond of forecasting the future and of telling others what will happen, and then if something turns out as you have said you imagine you have predicted it. This certainly is a *defect* which you have done well to avow, and your resolution of remaining silent when you feel inclined to make predictions is a wise one. Indeed, it will be better to check all thoughts about the future unless your conjectures are based on good reasons and external facts, not on fancy and sentiment. Even when you have such reasons do not be too sure of your prognostications, but rather stand in dread of being in error in your conjectures and put aside all thought of their being *prophecies*. This inclination to foretell the future may be a snare of the Evil One and may lead to grave consequences ; as for instance, it might cause you

to act hastily and rashly. Indeed you know this has already been the case, as for example, when you imagined that letters had come to Milan concerning you, and having given credence to this thought without any solid reason, you spoke sharply to me on the subject and decided to return next day to Milan without taking any advice on the step. Thus you made two mistakes, as by the grace of God you have since frankly acknowledged.

3rd. With regard to *your being prone to find fault with others*, here also as you must acknowledge there is a *defect* to be corrected, especially if you are in the habit of reproving people hastily and without mature consideration ; or again if there be question of things lawful in themselves but regarded by you as imperfections ; or again, of acts not manifestly wrong and admitting of a kindly interpretation. In such a case charity requires us to give our neighbour the benefit of the doubt. But speaking generally, to correct our neighbours when we are not called upon to do so and when it ill beseems our state in life, is fraught with danger, for it implies that we have already passed judgment on them. Now this we should fear to do, for in matters where there is no evident sin it is most difficult to judge aright, and our judgment may be swayed by secret pride. Try to restrain yourself therefore. If you believe that you have detected a grievous sin in your neighbour and it does not directly affect yourself, let the correction be made, if possible, by the Superiors. If however the sin were not grievous, or were doubtful, or if it were question of some imperfection in such cases you might, if an opportunity arises, ask the person to explain the matter, without actually correcting him.

4th. As for imagining that you receive miraculous favours, such as the discovery of the crucifix you mention, this also comes in great part from ill-health and must be treated as an illusion.

5th. In all these things it is easy to see there is a trick of the evil spirit. He is trying to divert your mind from considering and ascertaining your real defects, by filling

it with thoughts of supernatural and extraordinary favours, to the end that in the time of greatest need you may forget the most important point and may fail to know and correct yourself. You must be firm in resisting such thoughts, and not allow yourself to be deceived or to fancy that in thus resisting you are ungrateful to God. On the contrary it is for God's sake you act thus, in order that you may not be turned aside from the work of self-amendment. The illusion may be detected also in the sophistical arguments that come into your head, as for example when you attributed the increase in the number of persons at Mass to the consolation you felt in weeping, as though the gift of tears were a thing meritorious in itself. Even if your weeping had been a spiritual favour, it would merely have been a grace *gratis data*, and there would have been no merit in it. But as you rightly say, what happened afterwards showed that no good came of it as far as you were concerned; and if you gained nothing yourself, much less could you gain merit for others. Remember as a general rule that the chief sign whereby we may know that a spirit is of God is the fact that it brings us into closer conformity to the law of God, which alone we should have in view. Whatever estranges us from that law or diverts our attention from it is evil. The law of God is the helm of our ship. Supposing the ship were full of jewels and the pilot instead of looking to the helm spent his time gazing at the jewels, the ship as we can easily foresee would be in danger of being wrecked. The enemy of our souls sometimes fills the ship with false jewels in order that we may be tempted to keep our eyes fixed on them and leave the helm.

6th. As for the idea of *giving up the care of souls* do so by all means, deeming yourself incapable of assisting your fellow men in your present circumstances. Believe that you have enough to do to take care of your own soul, and, as far as it depends on yourself, do not seek any other responsibility. But let not this resolve be based on discouragement or unwillingness to

do anything for the souls of others should such work enter into the designs of God in your regard. Discouragement will ensue if you imagine that by renouncing the care of souls you abandon everything. It is not so. There still remains the most important of all duties, the care of your own soul. If God grants us the grace to save our own soul and to cleanse it from iniquity we may rest satisfied.

7th. One word more. You may experience some difficulty in turning away your mind from these fancies about supernatural favours, and from enquiring anxiously into their origin, and in this case you should acknowledge the presence of a *defect* and humble yourself for it. At the same time be more than ever diffident of yourself and reject everything except the thought of your own failings and God's law; for if these things came from a good source they would not be able to overcome you. The good spirits, says St. Paul, are subject to us, that is to our will and to reason.—May God bless and strengthen you and enable you to overcome all your enemies!

A. R.

XXIII.

TO GIULIO PADULLI AT MILAN.

He draws sentiments of humility from the difficulty of meditation.

Rovereto,

St. Teresa's Day, 1828.

During all these days of worry and bustle I have been with you in spirit, but was unable to write. At times friends must be content with the union of hearts, and this is not wanting as we know, you and Mellerio and Giovanni and I. Affection is its own witness. I was much gratified by the messages sent by our friend in Rome; they are always redolent of Paradise. He was kind enough to find me a lodging in the Convento de' Santi Apostoli; it is just what I wanted. When you write to him say I intend to start as soon as I receive the passport which I am expecting every day.

What you tell me about your studies is only the natural effect of those studies. In proportion as they arouse our interest and violently draw us in pursuit of them, they tire us out and rob us of our strength when they are excessively prolonged. Your experience is the same as my own; and I find it better never to spend so much time in reflection as to leave off exhausted. However, as you say, it is a good thing to feel our misery and to find that our nature in its present condition is so warped and so far below the higher and nobler things for which it was formed, that instead of deriving vigour from association with these things, it is weakened even to sickness and death. This is why holy men have desired and do desire to die. It is a heavy burden that we carry. We must drag this body about like

a cart; it reminds me of one of those carts described by Manzoni in his account of the Plague at Milan, a cart-load of pestilential flesh. As you say, we must humble ourselves the more deeply as we remember our fetters and our slavery. Is it possible that a slave, branded and flogged, should be proud? And yet man is so foolish that though he is even lower than a slave, he is at least in danger of being proud.

May God vouchsafe to give you all the blessings you desire for your wife, and enable you to say to her in presage of the future: "Thy child is reserved for the Holy One."

Cresce serbato al Santo

Quel che nel sen ti sta.

I have nothing worth mentioning to tell you of my studies. As my attention is divided among several subjects I do but little in each of them. If that little were what God wants from me it would be sufficient, and such I hope is the case.

I commend our friend at Monte Calvario to you and Mellerio, to your prayers I mean. I am impatient to be able to start. Adieu!

A. R.

XXIV.

TO THE MARCHESA MAZZENTA AT MILAN.

On the comfort derived from Jesus and Mary in our afflictions.

Rome,

August 15th, 1829.

Though I had the honour of visiting you one evening at Milan in the company of Count Mellerio, yet I should not take the liberty of writing to you were it not that my good friend Don Giovanni Padulli has enjoined me to do so, with all the authority he is wont to exercise when it is a question of some pleasant task. To tell the truth I do not know what good can come of a letter from me, except that I may obtain comfort in my little troubles by your imparting to me some good advice. I will therefore not apologise for the liberty I am taking, since you will know that it is impossible to refuse importunate friends when they try to make us do a thing at once useful and delightful. But I do entreat you to pardon the indiscretion of the friend you are wont to call Padre Gianlucone, for he really is indiscreet in wishing you to receive letters from certain persons whom I will not here describe, lest evil befall me.

After thus pleading for my friend, I will come to what concerns myself. My good friend Padulli often speaks of you, of the afflictions with which God visits you, and the patience and cheerfulness with which you endure them. I can only say that you are thus fashioning a crown which I envy you. Truly the grace of God does wonderful things if it transforms into good a thing so repugnant to our nature as suffering. How the word of Jesus Christ puts to shame our sensitive nature and all the elements of this

world ! He has taught us that if we would find happiness and greatness, we must follow a path which to all appearance and according to the foolish judgment of flesh and blood can lead only to littleness and misery. Jesus has taught us to believe that our eyes and hands and ears and senses play us false with regard to the true value of things, that we are deceived by our very nature. Our real good consists in another nature, something above nature, mysterious, hidden, but to be revealed one day. The power of Jesus Christ is made manifest precisely in causing us to believe in this good beyond compare, which is ultimately the possession of Himself, the King of Glory. We shall receive glory like unto His, but on condition that we have been humbled like Him ; we shall be happy and great as He is, provided that we bear the cross as He did. How sublime this doctrine is, and how far removed from all the devices of human wisdom, aye, of human imagination. In vain does the world reject it : darkness has never understood light. We however will rejoice in this truth and render gratitude to Him who out of His pure mercy has brought us into the marvellous light of truth. May He preserve us therein to the end !

God has given at the same time all the means whereby we may, if we please, maintain ourselves in the truth ; and they are means which cannot fail. What better safeguard can we have than the protection of Our Blessed Lady ? Her devout client, Don Giovanni expressly enjoined me to speak of her, and how sweet it is to do so ! Is not the dear name of Mary balm for all our wounds ? I wonder how often you have experienced the comfort of this name, the aid of her who is the Mother of all who have recourse to her ; for at the mere thought of this Mother of God and our Mother calm returns to the soul and serenity to the mind. Gladness accompanies the mere mention of her name ; by invoking it we renew our courage even in moments of greatest discouragement and fierce conflict, and we put the enemies of our soul to flight. He who trusts in Mary cannot perish. I speak all the more willingly of this our

Lady and Mother, in the hope that you will say an *Ave Maria* for me also, sinner as I am, and will place me with other great sinners under the protection of her mantle, where no one need fear however great his misery may be. How consoling is the right we have of saying *Mother* to the Mother of God, who gave us our Redeemer, who tended Him and followed Him to the cross. There, at the foot of the dying Saviour's cross, we obtained the right to call Mary our Mother, a right sanctioned by the word of Jesus: *Behold thy Mother.* It was then during our Redeemer's agony and in the sorrows of His Mother that our adoption took place. Amid the disappointments and crosses of this miserable life we find consolation in the thought that Mary's maternity was proclaimed in the hour of suffering. Indeed, it is in our suffering that the tenderness of this loving Mother finds a vaster field and, so to speak, her realm. Let us keep close to this gracious and loving consoler. Let us put ourselves into her hands and banish all fear. Happy is he who does this! Do you obtain this happiness for me. I conclude by asking you to excuse the liberty I am taking and remain,

Your humble servant,

A. R.

XXV.

TO GREGORIO BETONI BERARDI AT ROME.

*On the importance of Ethics as the basis of human society.*Rome,
January 4th, 1830.

Dear Signor Gregorio,

I return the MS. of your *Moral Maxims for Children* in four languages, which you kindly lent me to read. It does not become me to pronounce on the merits of a book which has been examined and praised by distinguished men. One remark I will make: that in your plan you have adopted the only method whereby we can raise the hopes of mankind which are centred in the rising generation. This method consists in vindicating the supremacy of the science of Morals, by restoring it to its proper place above all other doctrines inasmuch as they derive from it their power of doing good. Human presumption dragged it from its rightful place, much as sovereigns were dragged from their thrones and God himself would have been dethroned, had it been possible. From the tenderest age children must be instructed in their *duties*, for it is in virtue of moral duties that society exists and brings manifold blessings to man. Education is the effect of the social condition just as the existence of society is dependent on ethics. Hence to instil knowledge and at the same time to banish moral training from education is to destroy society; and what becomes of knowledge when society is annihilated? Would to God that all who are engaged in education and all rulers of states understood these salutary truths! I strive to propagate them by word and in writing, and whenever I meet with one of the few who are my fellow-labourers in this field I am filled

with affection towards him though he may personally be unknown to me, and I embrace him in spirit with brotherly affection and gratitude. What then must be my affection for you, whom I find wholly intent on the noble work of reforming the moral training of the young? You may form some idea of it, knowing well the love and reverence which I entertained for you even previously.

A. R.

XXVI.

TO CANDIDO MAZZARINI AT ANCONA.

Knowledge is sanctified by prayer.

Rome,

January 26th, 1830.

I have many debts of gratitude to you, and I pay them off as best as I can with sincere affection. Many thanks for the good wishes you sent me on the occasion of the recent holy festivities.

You will never have cause to repent of such sentiments as you express. Happy indeed are you to have found the source of truth and happiness. Be grateful to God who has given you so excellent a teacher in Canon Mucci and has bestowed on you withal a docile heart; and make good use of the fountain of wisdom which you say you have discovered. You wish me to pray for you: so I do, and I hope that you do the same for me. Dear Signor Candido, prayer is the most sublime of all philosophies, the most instructive of all schools. You are destined for the priesthood, that is for a life of sacrifice and prayer. It is because of the priest's constant union with God that the Scripture says: *the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge*. But those who are not watched over by God can keep nothing, not even error, for they stray from error to error.

Constancy can come only from Him who never changes. In saying this I only mean to applaud your noble sentiments and to show how much I appreciate them. Keep close to your good guide who will not fail to bring you into port. And continue to love me.

A. R.

XXVII.

TO BARTOLOMEO STOFFELLA AT ROVERETO.

On the choice of a state of life.

Rome,

March 21st, 1830.

Thank you for your letter which was full of kindness and affection. I was pleased to hear good news of your health, as I had been anxious about it.

As for the *irresolution*, which you say forms the chief feature in your character, if you refer to your being undecided about the Priesthood, what is the difficulty? What need is there of your becoming a priest? Is not the call to the priesthood a gift of God? Can we give ourselves a vocation? Woe unto us if we should even make the attempt! Therefore, do not let this alarm you. If you are called, respond without delay and with courage to the voice of God, lest you should have to render a strict account to the Divine Judge. But, as I have said, if you are not called, do not remain in suspense, but endeavour to be a good and God-fearing layman. All is comprised in this: *the law of God*. We ought to have but this one desire, to be faithful in keeping God's law. Blessed shall we be if we do this! All the rest will profit us nothing if we lose our souls; but if we are just, if we keep the word of God with all reverence, then we have gained all, then shall we reign in glory for all eternity. On this point certainly we need

to be resolute. Let us ask this grace of God, humbling ourselves to the dust as we do so ; let us ask it for ourselves, for our brethren who are in the same perils and difficulties as we are, for the grace of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to deliver and save us all.

You speak of my returning soon to Rovereto. I desire, indeed, to do so, but the time is not yet fixed. You say I should be able to make you *more satisfied with yourself*. If that were the case how happy I should be ! But what can I do ? I am conscious that of myself I can only do harm, and that I am quite worthless when it is a question of doing good. God, however, can effect good in you and in me and in all men.

Remember me to all our friends, especially the Orsi family and Fontana, and pay a visit sometimes to my mother. Adieu !

A. R.

XXVIII.

TO GIULIO PADULLI AT ROME.

On detachment from earthly things.

Monte Calvario,

May 24th, 1830.

What you tell me, dear friend, of your attachment to the visible presence of your daughter, will make you realize how much we are beguiled by our senses. They seize on earthly things instinctively and without reference to reason ; and so difficult is detachment that reason would seem to have no right to sever the ties she has not formed. This I believe to be the reason why St. John says that everything in the world is dangerous, namely, because the very use of sensible things, the mere fact of habitually and familiarly dealing with them, has the effect of rendering

us attached to them unconsciously, even without our being able to reproach ourselves with any particular act of grievous malice. Hence our liberty of spirit is diminished and despoiled of the full strength by which it should tend to God alone. But the very weakness we feel, the infirmity of the flesh we experience even when the spirit is willing ;— is not this a proof of the necessity of humility ? How consoling is the recompense of humiliation, for the securing of which God permits our weakness ! When we are humbled, justice is rendered to God and homage to the truth ; then it is that grace, meeting with no obstacle, is infused into the humble soul. Dear friend, since you give me an occasion of speaking in this strain, you invite me to consider my own weakness and need of humiliation, and I hope you will help me to obtain it from God.

Here I am greatly comforted to find that there is a manifest and abundant benediction from heaven. The Church is well frequented and the instructions in Christian Doctrine for adults and children are much appreciated. There are many Communions not only on festivals but also on week-days. The merit of the work belongs chiefly to Don Giovambattista (Lowenbrück) who works hard all day and sometimes loses even his night's rest. Last night, for instance, he spent in attending a dying person, after a day in which he had found only a few moments for dinner and supper, out of regular hours. His robust constitution helps him certainly ; but nothing would avail without the grace of God, from whom comes our real strength. Adieu !

A. R.

XXIX.

TO GIOVANNI PADULLI AT MILAN.

On the instability of human things.

Rovereto,

September 2nd, 1830.

I have been called home on business and was obliged to take a short route by Como, consequently I did not pass by Milan. If there appears to be any fault in this, you must forgive me, but in reality it was no fault of mine. I was obliged to deny myself the satisfaction of seeing you and your dear sons and making the acquaintance of your daughters. I shall hope to see you all on my way back ; that will be towards the end of the month if the passport comes in time.

O my friend, how futile are the things of earth ! how insecure and transitory ! how much wiser it is to place our treasure in heaven ! I can well imagine your position and many cares ; but it is God who has surrounded you with these duties, and if you respond with alacrity to the call and bear your burden resolutely, the various duties will be converted into so many rewards. The great art of Providence in purifying and perfecting us consists in placing us in circumstances diametrically opposed to our own will ; in this way we are obliged to mortify and conquer ourselves and watch continually. Otherwise, if everything were to our liking, we should go to sleep and never know what it is to fight with valour. Now a soldier who sleeps when he should be fighting is not worth much. Let us arm ourselves with the weapons of Faith, which are many and powerful ; and amongst these none is more powerful, as you know, than confidence in Mary our dear Mother.

Continue to pray for me and for the affairs of the Sacred Mount ; the blessing of God on the work is felt even here. May God be blessed in all things ! He it is who does everything. Adieu !

A. R.

XXX.

TO GIAMBATTISTA TERASCONI AT ROME.

On the choice of a state in life.

Calvario,

December 30th, 1830.

I thank you for the friendly remembrance which you retain of me, as proved by the kind letter just received. I often leave my delightful retreat in thought in quest of my friends at Rome, and many a time I fancy myself once more in the company of Terasconi, Giuliari, Barola, and other kind friends who were good enough to bear with me. I am glad you continue to apply earnestly to study. With regard to your doubts about your future state of life, you will find, my dear Terasconi, that our Lord will give you light to know His good pleasure, if you ask for it earnestly and do not allow yourself to be beguiled by flesh and blood which must perish. I counsel you to remain in tranquillity, peace and confidence in God. If you give yourself to Him without reserve, the light will come without your knowing whence it comes or whither it goes.

As for the public insecurity we must not trouble about it. Much less do I think it a good motive for delaying the accomplishment of a holy purpose or plan. It is in God we must trust ; and as far as depends on us, we must not allow the enemy of souls to reap advantage from the disturbances which he is perhaps promoting for some end of his

own, cunning trickster as he is. Take heed, dear Terasconi; for the public insecurity might possibly veil an excuse for want of generosity on our part. One can live in one place as well as another, and a man living in a place of retirement where he has consecrated himself to God's service, has no more reason to dread human vicissitudes than a man living in the world. I assure you that I enjoy great tranquillity and security in my state of life, in this good company of friends; and whatever may happen, at the very most I shall simply do what I should if I were alone, that is go to another place if there are disturbances here. After all, we must live somewhere or other as long as we carry about this miserable body which occupies space, and we are not yet disembodied spirits, which are out of space. I pay no attention to external things nor to the future, but I go straight on and try not to defer until to-morrow the little good that God asks me to do to-day. Such at least is my firm resolve. God only knows how many imperfections there are in what I do.

My companions were greatly pleased to receive your kind messages which they cordially reciprocate. They wish that you would come and converse with them in reality instead of, as you say, in your dreams. But this is not for us to talk about, we must leave it to our Lord. I embrace you affectionately begging your prayers. Salute all my friends.

I remain yours,

A. R.

XXXI.

TO COUNT GIAMBATTISTA GIULIARI AT ROME.

Of vocation to the Priesthood.

Calvario,

January 13th, 1831.

Many thanks for your kind letter which proves beyond doubt that you have not forgotten me. I am particularly pleased with the cheerful tone of your letter and the interest you take in this little Institute which has been brought into existence by Divine Providence, and is now being strengthened and consolidated by its care. I could tell you of several things in which the hand of God is seen more clearly every day; but I will content myself with begging you to render hearty thanksgiving to God (as you tell me you already do) and to implore Him with ever-increasing earnestness not to allow us to make a false step, but to direct us all safely in the way of salvation. It is by means of prayer that we can do everything, by a prayer that is *humble, confident and persevering*, as St. Alphonsus says.

Happy the man of prayer! That is what the priest must become "who is ordained in the things that appertain to God that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sin." This is the profession of the priest, this is his whole life. Happy are you, for in putting on this sacred garb (which I also wear though so unworthy of it), you will enter upon an office so consoling, secure, noble and sublime as that of living on earth in converse with God and treating with Him of our miseries and those of our brethren and fellowmen. "Our conversation is in heaven." There is no middle course. Woe to the priest who seeks to effect a compromise with the world, with self-love and the restless caprices of self-will! "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance."

These solemn words which you will utter while receiving the tonsure (which signifies the renunciation of all that is superfluous) will be the law you choose for life. Woe to those who pronounce these words and cling to another inheritance in their hearts! They lie "not unto men but unto God." Woe likewise to those who allow themselves to be led astray by the example of such priests! The danger of evil example is great, and unfortunately it is common in the world. But he who keeps his mind tranquil that it may meditate on the truth, he who has the advantage of breathing the purer air of some solitude consecrated to God, or lives in the company of a few holy priests, he alone will stand a chance of escaping the infection of that carelessness, coldness and thoughtlessness with which so many receive the imposition of hands, living at their ease afterwards as if they had never received Holy Orders, if not doing worse still.

I have followed this train of thought almost unconsciously; but I see that in your humility you ask me to give you some good advice on the state of life you are about to enter upon and therefore I do not regret having written this. Indeed I will frankly conjure you, out of sincere friendship, not to give yourself to God by halves but wholly, wholly. And then remain in a state of complete indifference with regard to any mission of charity that may be assigned to you by Divine Providence. Such indifference I believe to be the best disposition for serving God in accordance with His most holy will and for guarding against the artifices of self-love, that *great mischief-maker*, which disturbs and spoils everything. Ah! if only priests would think, not of serving their own interests, but of serving God and their neighbour for the love of God, indifferent to all besides, as they should be, they would then begin to be truly Priests of Christ. What glorious victories these sacerdotal principles would secure for us over the enemies of the human race! What union, strength and triumph would they not procure for the Church and what merit for the Priests themselves!

This is my advice to you my dear Count Giuliani; it is all contained in few but earnest words. I am sure you will not be displeased at my opening my heart to you. Give my greetings to all my friends especially Besi and Gentili from whom I am expecting a letter. On my way back from the Tyrol I stayed a few days with your Bishop and spoke to him of you.

A. R.

XXXII.

TO MICHELE PARMA AT ASTI.

On the same subject.

Calvario,

August 3rd, 1832.

May the Lord bless your good desires, of which He is, I trust, the author. And it is of this that we must make sure. All that does not come from the Lord is vanity, my dear Parma. The very love of man is vanity, I should say a lie, if it come not from the Lord. Now how shall we ascertain whether a thought comes from the Eternal Truth? I only know of one way: to take counsel with God, who is the eternally subsisting Truth; and this can be done practically by humble prayer and the Sacraments.

I advise you then and encourage you, my dear Parma, to place all your confidence in the grace of Jesus Christ. That is the only stone which can sustain any edifice, from this source come all those benedictions which crown the work begun by the Lord. I feel the more bound to exhort you to this confidence in grace alone, because you tell me that the Lord seems to call you to serve in His Sanctuary. A great step is this for you to take! All must depend on the manifestation of the Lord's will, for as you are aware, no one can assume the dignity of

the priesthood, unless God Himself move him and call him *like Aaron*. It is a sublime vocation, the manifestation of the Divine will must be clear, generous the resolution, and humble the mind of the aspirant. It is not so easy, my dear friend, to read the secrets of our own hearts, which we must always distrust; and the Divine will does not always manifest itself clearly unless we give ourselves to recollection and earnest prayer that God may impart to our souls that light, which no other can counterfeit. You could do nothing better than, before making up your mind definitely, to make a retreat of some days in a quiet spot, apart from friends and business; then under the direction of a master in the spiritual life, you will be able to treat of the affair with God Himself, endeavouring by means of meditation, prayer and other suitable exercises, to obtain light to know God's will and the strength necessary to carry it into execution. It is the love I bear you which induces me to speak thus. I have said enough indeed for one letter, so I will add nothing, though there are many things I should like to say. I embrace you and remain,

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

XXXIII.

TO N. N.

On the ways of Divine Providence.

Calvario,

October 17th, 1832.

"The good news, after eighteen centuries, is still fresh for the world which has heard it without understanding its meaning." You are right my dear friend. It is still news to the world; "the darkness did not comprehend it," and never will; but in all centuries the saints have understood it. Sons of God there have always been and will be always, "and they shall shine like stars for all eternity." Men cannot increase their number, nor decrease it. God has counted the elect and no creature can alter the reckoning. Man may be proud, but he cannot destroy the pride of other men, God alone can do that. He has reserved to Himself all that pertains to the perfection of the moral order, and if He makes use of human instruments He has chosen them *ab aeterno*. "I have chosen you;" they have not chosen Him; "you have not chosen Me;" for in the supernatural order man is of himself useless; "we are unprofitable servants." Woe to those who intrude: "prophets were not sent and they ran." Man has no responsibility beyond the observance of the moral law, conforming himself to Him who said; "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." The man who follows the Gospel in its humility and meekness is loyal and generous; he does not fear to declare the truth which is his good, and to confess Christ. He will never, for the sake of effecting some good result which God does not will, make a base compromise with the tenets of the world

The Gospel is sufficient unto itself. God is all; and the just man places his affections in things eternal; and from this source, like a stream issuing from a sea, comes temporal happiness also, not the satisfaction of our cupidity indeed, but that temperate happiness which God sees to be useful to the designs of His mercy. Misfortune and the cross will always be a treasure to the disciples of Christ, and will never fail them; though their charity should work prodigies it will expect to do no more than lighten and alleviate the cross of their brethren. Religion does not need to be justified by human devices; when practised it justifies itself, facts themselves prove that temporal happiness springs spontaneously from the observance of the law. The lawyer was right when he said: "A wonderful thing is the Christian religion which seems to care only for heaven and yet produces the happiness of earth." Yes, "piety is good for all things," but real piety, not cupidity. Let the stimulus be charity, that is, love of God and love of men for God's sake, for all things are possible to charity. In this way we do not seek human interests directly, for it is only the kingdom of God that must be sought for its own sake. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." The rest will come of itself. "All these things shall be added unto you, for your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things."

The Church in her Saints shows yet higher wisdom, a wisdom not understood by the world which deems it folly. This wisdom consists in fleeing from earthly goods, in living a life of abstinence, mortification and voluntary poverty. She bears these words graven on her heart, "Blessed are the poor." Christ came to preach the Gospel to the poor. He who had not whereon to lay his head came to make them sharers in his treasures. It is true that from the root of poverty grows a fruit of contrary nature. Riches accumulate where poverty has appeared. It was thus the Church became rich; thus alone can the religion of the Crucified triumph over material interests. But how much higher is the counsel of God than that of man!

When the Church is laden with the spoils of Egypt, when she seems to hold the destinies of the human race in her hands; then it is, and then only, that she has become as it were powerless, like David weighed down by the armour of Saul; it is the time of her decline. But the Almighty who watches over her destinies, having thus humbled her and taught her that her members are men subject to temptation, having shown her by bitter experience that her strength is in Him alone, then takes compassion on her and permits the violence of temporal rulers to seize upon the wealth of the Church. She then returns to her primitive simplicity which by its marvellous beauty draws again all things to itself, that they may in due time be again renounced at the bidding not of men, but of her Spouse when He shall say: "Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one and come."

A. R.

XXXIV.

TO COUNT MELLERIO AT MILAN.

On the death of a relative.

Rovereto,

February 5th, 1836.

Don Luigi, at your request, informed me of the illness of Giacomino Somaglia. By the same post Count Cesare Castelbarco informs me of his death. I can imagine the greatness of your affliction at so unexpected a blow, and it is the thought of your sorrow that grieves me. On the other hand I remember your Christian fortitude, already so severely tried, I consider the infinite goodness of God who is wont to adapt the burden to our strength and even increases His grace in proportion to the need. This thought gives me full confidence that you will bear this apparent misfortune with your usual resignation, and this resignation will alleviate your

pain and procure you new merit and recompense. No doubt you will see in this event a new proof of God's ineffable goodness, who gives you an opportunity of showing Him your love and submission to His holy will. Assuredly, there is nothing so lovable as the will of God ; nothing else indeed is worthy of love. But when this Divine will requires some sacrifice of us which is hard to nature, then it seems to me infinitely dear and sweet and full of joy for the faithful soul, for the man who has given his heart to Jesus Christ. To love the will of God when all is bright and pleasant is no great love, and one knows not even whether it be love at all ; but to love it in adversity is a love pure as refined gold, a love that satisfies the cravings of the soul that suffers lovingly.

O my dear Mellerio, you have no need of consoling words from me, you who have so often told me how our holy religion transforms into joy the most painful events. Nevertheless I think you will like to be reminded how precious is the cross to a Christian. For my part, I take pleasure in recalling such things, especially with a friend who, like yourself, has but one heart with me. The hand of God in touching you has touched me also. The All-wise and Almighty God who made the heavens, wishes to train us to celestial love ; the discipline of suffering is not less marvellous than the creation of the universe, though it is hidden for the most part and appears to destroy rather than to build. In fact it destroys what is visible in order to create the invisible within us, it removes earthly objects from our hearts in order to give us an Object that is eternal, immense, infinite, and without measure. I can picture to myself the desolate condition of your sister and the Somaglia family, and you will have an opportunity of doing good by giving them a share in your own constancy. As soon as I received the sad news, I prayed and asked others to pray for the departed. I embrace you and hope to see you again before long. May Jesus Christ Crucified be your consolation ! No balm is so healing as His Precious Blood.

A. R.

XXXV.

TO THE SAME.

On the occasion of his friend's feast day.

Tamié,

July 24th, 1836.

In this profound solitude I shall celebrate to-morrow the Feast of St. James. You may imagine how much you will be in my thoughts, and how often I shall pray to God on your behalf, and certainly I shall do so with all my heart, because one does not speak to God for form's sake. I will say no more about your feast, except that I hope you will do for me what I do for you. For the rest, this vast monastery, almost the only building in this narrow and elevated valley, these monuments of ancient piety, the memories of the great Abbot of Clairvaux (in whose time this monastery was founded by Peter II. afterwards Bishop of Tarantasia, one of St. Bernard's monks and first Abbot of Tamié,) and the shades of monks and abbots which I sometimes fancy still haunt this sacred place,—all these things raise the mind to God, and make one envy the life, more heavenly than terrestrial, of the sons of St. Bernard. Far from the world, these adventurous mortals forsook the society of men, to find in lonely valleys the companionship of angels! I cannot express to you more fully the sentiments of my heart.

A. R.

XXXVI.

TO ANTONIO MAZZETTI AT MILAN.

He explains his principles of action.

Stresa,

September 17th, 1836.

I was much pleased to receive your kind letters, especially the first, as it contained a token of sincere friendship. Of praise, commonly speaking, I take little account, because I know too well that it is not always sincere. But advice and admonitions, and even reproofs from friends, ah! these are never deceptive; they bear the stamp of sincerity; they are gifts from the heart. On the other hand I have so great an esteem for your high character and good judgment that I look upon your words as oracles, and even desire that you might speak still more plainly, lest I should mistake your meaning. If, however, I have understood you, I must beg your Excellency to consider that there is an All-good Providence, and that I do my best to follow its indications; also, I would ask you to remember the "nos stulti" of St. Paul—"we are fools for Christ's sake" words of profound meaning.

On the other hand I cannot complain; for God has, among His other graces, given me a tranquil mind, so that I do not feel annoyed if any one is not well-disposed towards me or speaks against me. I shall always be happy when I am conscious of doing harm to no one, happier still if I can do any good to my fellow-men. I know that both at Trent and at Rovereto no one can say with truth that I have done him any harm: this is my consolation. Some think I have done too much. If I

have exceeded in anything it has been in the time given to study at least in earlier years ; but in so far as actual work is concerned you know my motto is *not to undertake anything of my own accord, nor to refuse to do a good work through weakness or cowardice*. To undertake things of my own accord is not in keeping with my character, and I know myself to be unfit for that sort of thing ; but to refuse to do good when asked, seems to be resistance to Divine Providence, an injury done to God who offers me an opportunity of serving Him : it would be like turning my back on Him. I make it a matter of conscience. I understand and know but too well, how many obstacles are encountered even when one takes every precaution. But what of that ? It would fare ill with the world, if no one were willing to sacrifice himself. I am deeply persuaded that there never was a time in which men of sacrifice were more needed than at the present day ; and perhaps such men were never before so scarce. Happy should I be, if my sacrifice were worth something before God ! I know to whom I am writing, and therefore I do not refrain from disclosing my whole mind to you. In any case, I intend to draw profit from your admonitions by redoubling my endeavours not to exceed in anything.

A. R.

XXXVII.

TO COUNT FRANCESCO FORMENTI AT RIVA DI
TRENTO.

On vocation to the religious life.

Stresa,

October 15th, 1836.

Although your letter gave me no little consolation, I was not surprised, knowing that the spirit breatheth where it will. I urge you strongly to cherish the desire to give yourself wholly to God, for it cannot but come from a good source. You must, however, take time to deliberate in so important a matter and act with diffidence of self. First of all, you should have recourse to God by earnest and *constant* prayer, beseeching Him to make known His holy will and give you grace to accomplish the same. My dear friend, we must not do things by halves. After prayer, therefore, you should consider attentively that he who wishes to consecrate himself to God in religion, must make a complete sacrifice of self, of soul and body, and renounce all that he has in the world. "He who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple." In this general renunciation is comprised the renunciation of yourself, of your own will. "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." It is not a question of leading a retired life, but of doing a great deal more. I advise you therefore after doing these two things, to make a spiritual retreat of eight or ten days, placing yourself under the direction of a wise and holy priest and disclosing to him the state of your soul. In this retreat you will treat with God and your Director as to the choice of a state of life, according to the

wise rules laid down by the Saints for ascertaining the Divine will. When you have done all this, write and tell me the result and what are the sincere dispositions of your soul. In the meantime I will pray that God may give you the light you need, and I will get others to do the same. Everything is obtained by prayer; and without prayer nothing can be done.

I embrace you with all my heart and again recommend to you much prayer and generosity and a good retreat.

Your affectionate cousin,

A. R.

XXXVIII.

TO COUNT ANTONIO FEDRIGOTTI AT ROVERETO.

Condolence on his brother's death.

Turin,

February 6th, 1837.

My dear Cousin.

If there are moments of life when we feel constrained to pour out our hearts to those united to us by ties of blood and friendship, this is especially the case in the presence of some great calamity. Such a calamity has now befallen you and your good family in the sad and unexpected loss of your eldest brother, Giuseppe, which has come as a great blow to me also. By my own grief I can measure your affliction, that of his mother, widow and brother.

Oh my dear cousin ! how unfathomable are the designs of the Most High, how inscrutable His decrees ! One so beloved, so pious, so benevolent that he formed the delight of his home and native city, who did so much good by example and by work, is cut off in the prime of life by a terrible disease, which no prayers or sighs can avert ! And yet all is adorable that comes from God ; and even in the dread

moment when He employs the scourge, He is good, He is just, He is holy! Let us then give to nature the involuntary tribute of tears, if she demand it; but afterwards let us prostrate ourselves, humbled and contrite, before that God who disposes of everything with no less beneficence than wisdom, and yield Him the sacrifice of our hearts. Let us offer Him our whole selves: let us adore His every will: let us bless Him in all His works, and never cease kissing the hand that strikes indeed, but always in love. He is our Father, and He does all for the good of His children. He takes us to Himself or lets us live, according as He knows it will be most expedient for the salvation of our souls. And so we must have a well-grounded assurance that if God has snatched away our dear Giuseppe, it was because He saw that this was the right moment, the moment when he was ripe for heaven, and that it was needless to expose him longer to the temptations and dangers of this present life.

Oh who can be sure of keeping his footing on so dangerous a path? And what a grace it is when God calls to eternal glory those chosen souls, whom He foresees would be encompassed by dangers and perhaps diminish their store of merits if their life were prolonged! But this foresight belongs to God; we can only feel sure that He calculates all in His infinite goodness, and that He does so especially in the case of the privileged and chosen souls, among whom we may, I firmly believe, number our dear Giuseppe. I have watched his progress in goodness and piety for some time, and it affects me now to think of the long conversations he held with me whenever we were alone on the things of God and on matters of conscience (and his was a most delicate conscience); his disenchantment and complete detachment from the things of the world, which he treated as transitory illusions. The thought of death was familiar to him; he spoke often of it and made his preparation earnestly as though conscious he had not long to live. All these things are full of consolation to me, and lead me to believe firmly

that death was for him only a mercy of that God, who wished to see this beautiful soul in Heaven. I do not speak of his alms, which I trust, he will find recorded in Heaven and returned with usury. None the less we are bound to pray for his soul, since human frailty is great and the least stain suffices to retard his entrance into glory. I celebrated Mass immediately for him besides offering other prayers and asking for the prayers of others and causing them to be offered.

Meanwhile let us gain something for our own souls from this great misfortune. We must be fully persuaded that this is not our country, but only the way that leads there, only a place of probation and of conflict, for gaining the crown. We have not come to this earthly city to enjoy ourselves, but only to merit. If we have this great truth before our eyes, as dear Giuseppe had (especially during the last few years), we shall always be ready for the great journey; no fleeting or deceitful good will have power to enslave us. Our gaze will be fixed on the eternity to which we are destined; our only care will be to do all the good we can, trusting in God alone. How happy will our death then be! It will be the most beautiful moment of life!—May our Lord bless and comfort you all. Present my sentiments of profound condolence to your family.

Your affectionate cousin,

A. R.

XXXIX.

TO COUNT GIACOMO MELLERIO AT MILAN.

*He invites him to be present at the first religious profession
in the Institute of Charity.*

Stresa,

February 23rd, 1839.

Dear friend,

It would be delightful if you could be a witness of our oblation to God; nay, you must take part in it. I am preparing your *diploma as an Ascribed Member*, so as to give it to you on the very day, when, you will, I doubt not, offer yourself wholly to God in union with us. The day itself will be all for the Church and prayer, and we shall hardly be together except spiritually, but on the following day we shall be able to have our long talks.

Gentili and his companions will do the like in England; and thus the two choirs, so far apart, will blend their voices together, for in God we are all one.

In the meantime, I am studying the plan of the Christian Lyceum; it is one of the things we shall discuss together. Remember me to our good friends, and let us prepare ourselves by prayer.

Your affectionate friend,

A. R.

XL.

TO MR. ALEXANDER FLETCHER AT ROME.

*An answer to some inquiries respecting the Institute of
Charity.*

Stresa,

February 14th, 1840.

The object of the Institute of Charity is the *exercise of perfect virtue*, in so far as this is possible to man with the aid of Divine grace. By perfect virtue is understood that which Jesus Christ has taught us by word and example, namely, *universal charity*, that especially which tends to the salvation of souls. Hence the Institute proposes to practise universal charity as much as possible, and embraces the work of the *missions* and every other exercise of the sacred ministry as so many *means* to the attainment of its end. The missions and other exercises appertaining to the *active life* are only undertaken in pursuance of external manifestations of the Divine will as interpreted by Superiors, for everything in the society is directed by obedience, this being essential to good order.

There are no austerities prescribed in common, and one may have a fire in winter and a rest after dinner in summer, but these things also are subject to obedience and the sacrifice of self-will. If therefore any one happened to be deprived of these comforts for any reason, he would have to take it patiently as a penance; for no one ever acquires a right to such things and consequently he cannot complain of their withdrawal. It is true that the spirit of the Institute adapts itself to every real need, not exacting uniformity when exceptions are required by individuals, nevertheless those who have been accustomed

to study comfort would find it difficult to realize the high ideal of the Institute or to be happy in it, without solid virtue and great determination. But anyone who has virtue and a firm intention of submitting his judgment to Superiors, even when they seem at fault or indiscreet, considering that everything happens by permission of God: such a man would be highly suitable to the Institute, for perfect virtue consists in making a generous sacrifice of self.

The novitiate preceding the *first* perpetual vows lasts two years, after which there are other exercises before making the vows of professed religious. Members must be ready to go wherever, in their Superiors' opinion, they can do most good, were it even to the ends of the earth.

If you require further information you may obtain it from Don Paolo Barola who will give you also, if you like, the *Maxims of Perfection* which contain the spirit of the Institute, as also the Rule inserted in the Apostolic Letters. I shall also be glad to send you any further explanations you may desire. With much esteem,

I remain your humble servant,

A. R.

XLI.

TO MR. AMBROSE PHILIPPS IN ENGLAND.

Of Don Gentili's coming to England.

Stresa,

May 5th, 1840.

My dear friend and brother in our Lord Jesus Christ to whom be honour and glory for ever.

Here is dear Gentili at last! He would have been with you before, but for the state of his health and the mortal illness of a brother, who was to have accompanied him. Receive him now with your wonted charity, the charity in which I send him to you. May he be a new Augustine for England; the arm of the Lord is not shortened and His mercies are infinite. Let us pray and we shall obtain: we seek only His will and His glory. I recommend Gentili's health to your kind care, he is not strong. For this reason and also from motives of prudence, I think it will be necessary for him to restrain his zeal and not undertake too much at the beginning.

I am sending you by Gentili the letter of *ascription* to the *Institute*, the seal of the charity which unites us. Who knows whether it may not please God to make our ascribed society do great good in England! I have a presentiment it will be so: it appears to me so well adapted to the needs of your nation. I even think it is from your nation that this society will spread to other nations, and draw together in the strictest union of body and soul the most fervent disciples of Christ throughout the world. For the ensign given us by the Master is *universal charity*. Don Luigi will give you further information concerning us. Pray for me, your affectionate friend in Christ,

A. R.



XLII.

TO THE MARCHESE DI CAVOUR AT TURIN.

*He thanks him for the dedication of a book and speaks of
a recently published attack on himself.*

Stresa,

May 24th, 1841.

Yesterday I received your philosophical work *Des Fragmens philosophiques*, which I shall certainly read with pleasure and profit. It was a pleasant surprise to find it dedicated to me by the Author, for I look upon this as a new proof of his friendship and kindliness. I can assure you that the esteem and *unalterable* friendship which you manifest in my regard, is and shall be warmly returned. I will give myself the pleasure of writing again when I have made further acquaintance with the book.

I hope there will be no difficulty in answering the *infamous libel* which has been written against me.* I am only sorry to be obliged to spend any portion of my precious and scanty time upon such a work. But one must have patience. From various parts of Italy I hear that nothing is left undone to injure me. I did not know there were so many people in the world averse to me, for I am not aware of having offended any one. Whatever may be the cause, I foresee that the result will be useful and that God will draw great good out of this evil. Do you help me in the meantime with your prayers.

I have thought a great deal about your kind

* This pamphlet was entitled: "Some propositions of Sig. Antonio Rosmini Serbati, Priest of Rovereto, with reflections thereon by Eusebio Cristiano" It was refuted by the "Reply to the so-called Eusebio Cristiano," Milan 1851.

invitation to take charge of the House of Refuge. I should like to reply in the affirmative, but, having weighed everything, I feel obliged to decline. I thank you for your kindness. When it shall please God the Institute of Charity will find a little corner in Turin itself. Meanwhile I remain, your humble servant in our Lord,

A. R.

XLIII.

TO COUNT GIACOMO MELLERIO AT MILAN.

He justifies his mode of answering opponents.

Verona,

August 27th, 1841.

Dear friend,

Your dear letter of the day before yesterday is another pledge of your true Christian friendship. I may tell you that I have followed your advice and tempered some expressions that were somewhat pungent in the *Reply to Eusebius*, though even now I find that you consider it too bitter. I also should blame myself if I had so written, as you imagine, because "my adversary was the first to offend and wound me in the most delicate point, the integrity of my faith." But I protest that such a reason has no weight with me, for, by the grace of God, I can truthfully say I have never paid any attention to personal insults. You may be sure I should not have answered Eusebius by a syllable, if I had not been afraid of the injurious consequences to true doctrine and the glory of God. No, I repeat that, thanks be to God, I do not write and have never written in the spirit of revenge.

Why do I write then? I write for the public good, and from the moment that I consider this my duty, I choose the simplest and most expeditious means of obtaining the

object I have in view. God forbid we should deny the truth; but we should set forth that portion of the truth which will produce the greatest good. The truth is sometimes a bitter pill, but so are the medicines given by physicians; and if there is any way of doing good to my antagonist I think it is the one I have adopted, after the example of our Lord and the Saints. As long as you consider the cause to be mine personally, you may think me wanting in meekness; but if you consider the cause as that of God you will realize that meekness and true charity mean plain speaking sometimes. Our Divine Master was no less humble and no less meek when He used the word *fox* to Herod and *hypocrite* or *blind* to the Pharisee, than when He prayed for those who crucified Him. The good we have in view is always one, and that is *charity* towards our enemies themselves; but the *means* are many, and among them is that of sometimes saying *blind* to the blind and *fox* to the fox.

I only meant to let my opponents understand that I intend to make a determined resistance, and lay bare the plots that are continually being hatched against the Institute. Even for their own sake I think it is necessary to make a bold stand. I know I shall do no good, and that underhand persecution will still go on; but at least they will not find it so easy to gain credence. We are both agreed in wishing to do what is most conformable to the spirit of our Divine Master. Who can doubt it? All else is folly and deceit. I certainly never intended to depart from His standard, and I would rather die than do so wilfully. Continue to pray that our Lord may enlighten me if I am in the wrong, and not allow any spirit to sway me but His, which alone I desire and love,

Yours affectionately in Christ.

A. R.

XLIV.

TO THE SAME

On the same subject.

Verona,

September 7th, 1841.

Dear friend,

We arrived happily at the Seminary yesterday evening and the good Fathers received us with their usual kindness. I have, however, another object in writing to you besides giving you news of our journey, and that is to answer your dear letter of the 1st instant. I was not able to speak to you freely on my way through Milan, but I am afraid you might think, if I made no answer at all, that I had not appreciated your charitable admonition. I shall now speak with my usual frankness, as I am sure you wish me to do.

In the first place, I acknowledge that your decided expression of opinion causes me some misgivings, and I begin to think I may have used too strong and humiliating expressions in addressing my opponent. I hope your advice will bear fruit in the future, though it may come too late in the present instance. Let it be agreed that I was in the wrong. I do not intend to defend myself, knowing too well that I should be capable of everything bad did not our Lord sustain me. But I should think it a false humility and an offence against truth and friendship, not to say plainly that the reasons you adduce are not as cogent as they appear to you. You will recognize this if you make the following reflections.

You say you cannot conceive how *insults* heaped on our neighbour can give glory to God; and you are quite right. Neither can I conceive such a thing possible, for insults are sins, and sin is directly opposed to the glory of God. But are words of blame and humiliating expressions always insults? Certainly not. An *insult* implies *injustice*, consequently words and appellations of blame are not insults if they express the truth. It is not an insult, for instance, to call a thief a *thief*, as Jesus Christ did when He called the sellers in the Temple thieves.

You next say that our Divine Master both could and did use humiliating epithets because He was God and entitled to say "revenge is mine," whereas man has no such right and cannot read his neighbour's heart. But if you consider the matter attentively, you will perceive that our Lord cannot be said to have acted in a spirit of *revenge* in His first coming, this being entirely reserved for His second coming. He always acted from motives of *charity* and to give us an example, and He never offended against the virtue of meekness, even when He used the expressions *foolish, slow of heart, blind, thieves, fox*, or described the whole generation of the Jews as *wicked* and Peter as *Satan*. All these and other epithets were used without insulting anyone, without revenge, without loss of meekness, and in order to teach us that it is sometimes necessary to be stern and even bitter *for the sake of charity*, as is the case when this course appears most beneficial to the person we are addressing. In order to exercise this form of charity we must certainly be free from human passion and illusion, for strong words and blame are quite consonant with charity and meekness, but not so human passion and the illusion that accompanies it.

Then you cite the example of St. Paul who blessed when he was reviled. Who can doubt that this is the duty of a man of God and Christ's disciple? But cannot a man be said to "bless those who curse" him even whilst he speaks strongly? Courtesy does not consist in the actual words we use, but in the spirit in which they are uttered.

I am sure you will remember that St. Paul had several opportunities of imitating Jesus Christ in speaking with severity to his adversaries, or rather the adversaries of the glory of God. You know that he addressed Elymas, the magician, as nothing less than "full of guile and all deceit." Not content with this he called him "child of the devil;" and still not content he added "enemy of all justice." St. Polycarp likewise, on meeting a heresiarch in Rome, bestowed on him the title of "*primogenitus diaboli*." Neither can we say that St. Paul committed a sin in this instance, because this would be a manifestly rash judgment, and one belied by God, who confirmed the conduct of St. Paul by a miracle.

Consider further another incident narrated in Chap. xxiii of the *Acts*. St. Paul, having ingenuously said that he had proceeded with a *good conscience*, Ananias condemning him hastily, "commanded them that stood by to strike him on the mouth." Then St. Paul did not hesitate to call the high priest "a whited wall." He cannot be said here either to have taken revenge, or offended meekness or sinned against charity, but rather to have imitated our Lord in an act of zeal for the truth, even though it gave offence.

It is true that expressions of gentleness are more frequently met with in the writings of the Saints than those of harshness, but this simply means that occasions when severity should be used are less frequent. Certainly in all that concerns ourselves, meekness and gentleness should be the rule; but in the cause of justice, of virtue, of Catholic truth and our neighbour's good, severity may sometimes be employed. Such severity does not spring from a hard heart, but from one that is tender and meek, in spite of what men may say.

The traits of apparent hardness met with in the words and writings of the Saints, beginning from St. John the Baptist who called the Jews "a brood of vipers," must not be attributed so much to their frailty as to their zeal. Thus also was fulfilled the precept of the Holy Ghost :

"Answer a fool according to his folly lest he seem to himself to be wise," which precept must occasionally be put in practice, unless we allow that the Holy Spirit spoke to no purpose.

All this, however, does not justify any fault that I may have committed, and I repeat that I have no wish to excuse myself. Though your reasons are not convincing, I am much concerned at the impression you have received from my pamphlet, though it may be that you would not have been so strongly moved if you were better acquainted with the circumstances of the case and the nature of the evil we have to oppose. In any case, the doubt you have raised will make me profit by your advice on other occasions, and do you bear with me so that I may attain to what alone I seek: to know our Lord sincerely and imitate Him as fully as possible. Pray also that God may bless these holy Exercises.

Your friend in Christ,

A. R.

XLV.

TO THE SAME.

On the same subject.

Verona,

September 13th, 1841.

Dear friend,

Rest assured that I bear no malice to any one. At the same time I am firmly persuaded that *Truth* and *our holy Religion* are identical, and that we do good to religion by unveiling artifice and dissimulation. Our God is the God of truth and our Master is the Truth. The world indeed cares little for truth, and consequently but little for God; so people come to think He is honoured by forming parties and putting appearances in place of the substance. No, no, if we love God, let us love Him simply and without human partisanship. The notion that party spirit is useful to Religion is a deplorable delusion and has done great harm to the Church. I think you will agree with me, for I am sure you are one of those true adorers who adore God in spirit and in truth. I embrace you in the earnest hope that you will receive these frank words in the spirit in which they are written. Adieu in the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

A. R.

XLVI.

TO THE COUNTESS E. DI CASTELLENGO AT PARIS.

On the utility of sickness.

Stresa,

July 14th, 1842.

Whilst pleased to hear that your eldest daughter is cured, I am grieved to learn that you yourself are attacked by the same illness. I shall not fail to ask for prayers for you, as you desire, as also to offer my own poor prayers to the Most High, that the cure may be effectual and all may redound to the good of your soul and its increased beauty in the eyes of God. Human nature must needs feel suffering, but the spirit, taught by Jesus Christ and enlightened by grace, knows well that illness is a precious opportunity of imitating our Lord and practising supernatural virtue, and so receives it as a special grace and token of His love, of whom it is written: "whom the Lord loves He chastises."

I know and see by your letter that you realize these great truths, and you must not be surprised or alarmed if nature rebels. Our nature was originally made by God for happiness, and suffering is only an irregularity produced by sin. It is enough if we are resigned to the Divine will in the depths of our soul and measure things by the true light of faith, which light shows us that our greatest good lies hid in what is most repugnant to flesh and blood. It is enough if we direct our efforts, not to stifling our natural sensibility, but to cultivating a supernatural joy which will hold it in check and eventually conquer. That is why I had no scruple in saying I was grieved to hear of your illness, for such grief is not blameable and only

requires to be subordinated to the higher consideration of the loving kindness of God. Thus I may add in all sincerity that, even whilst I deplore the cause, I praise our Lord who has permitted this affliction for some great good.

Who can doubt that this suffering will be followed by greater purity of soul and detachment from the things of earth, greater union with God and appreciation of heavenly things, disenchantment and increased spiritual light, new fervour and a great longing to spend what remains of life in praising God, in His love and the service of your neighbour? You will offer all you suffer in payment of your debts, and this voluntary oblation will be favourably received. There will be moments when you will feel your own nothingness deeply, and then you will make those acts of humility which are the just tribute of the creature. In your anguish you will feel the need of God and pour out those prayers that are only made in dire distress and reach the heart of the Eternal. In fine, you will have opportunities for a thousand acts of love which do so much good to souls and procure their eternal salvation. All these benefits which I imagine as forming part of God's design, are motives for holy hope and joy; and so I hasten to share them with you.

For the rest, in order to make these acts more perfectly I advise you to keep more than ever before you the maxim of Jesus Christ: "Take no thought for the morrow." This simple act of banishing the thought of the future with the fears that accompany it, is a great act of virtue and of abandonment of self into the loving hands of our Lord: it constitutes that walking in simplicity before God, which is so highly commended in Holy Scripture. Why should we picture to ourselves what we do not know and God wishes to hide from us? Why should we increase our present suffering by brooding over misfortunes that have not come and may never come to us? Is it not better to leave the care of ourselves entirely to God and live tranquilly from day to day and hour to hour, without seeking

to know what lies beyond, fully persuaded that no mother's love is like to His? This tranquillity does not prevent our turning to God constantly with filial confidence, and telling Him not only our real wants, but those also created by our weakness and our ignorance. He is not offended, but listens and pities us in His great tenderness; and He either enables us to rise above them or else supplies these imaginary wants with maternal solicitude. Even the sight of our own defects should not disturb our peace. Jesus Christ died for us: He has preserved us in life so far that we might be cleansed in His Blood. Our penance need not be long if only it is loving; and the best of all penances is patience under the crosses which He sends and adapts to our shoulders and helps us to bear. Generosity of heart then, my dear Countess, and sorrow for sin by all means, but a trustful sorrow that is changed and merged into love! The fears that inevitably beset the imagination are not sins, neither do they destroy resignation; very often they are only new sufferings to be borne like all the rest with spiritual patience. Remember me before the Lord in whom I am your humble servant,

A. R.

XLVII.

TO CATERINA ROSMINI AT TRENT.

Of the spirit proper to the Sisters of Providence.

Stresa,

November 26th, 1842.

My dear Cousin,

Being aware of your sentiments as expressed in your letter, and the firm persuasion you entertain that God intends you to consecrate yourself entirely to Him in the service of your neighbour, I doubt not that you are called, as you say, to the Institute of Providence. These Sisters do just what you wish to do. They utterly renounce the world and its allurements; they make a complete sacrifice of themselves, in order to serve Jesus Christ, the Spouse of their souls in their neighbour, seeking especially to secure the salvation of those entrusted to them. Profound humility, continual self-denial, perfect obedience, ardent charity, the desire to imitate in all things their Divine Master: this is the substance of their Rule. No work of charity is alien to their Institute. The work, however, in which they are chiefly engaged at present is the education of girls rich and poor, in town and in country, wherever Divine Providence sends them. They delight in the title of "*poor servants of the servants of the poor.*"

They make profession of poverty in order to imitate Jesus Christ in this also; they take the three vows (after passing through the Novitiate), which they renew at first every year, afterwards every three years, and finally for life, if superiors allow them to do so.

If this then is the life to which you feel called, be of good courage, for God does not fail to support those who

choose Him for their only good, their Lord, their Master, their Exemplar and their Spouse. Call upon His Name, implore of Him the grace of accomplishing your sacrifice, after His example, on the holy cross of religion, held there by the three nails of the holy Vows, and then leave the rest to Him. Without doubt our Lord will hear your prayer : He will guide you gently on your way : you will be consoled ; but when ? This He alone knows ; you have but to desire, to pray, to long for Him day and night with resignation and tranquillity. You have a good earthly father who is fit to be also a spiritual father to you. What a privilege this is ! Tell your father all that is in your heart. As soon as you have given him proofs of solid virtue, as soon as he is convinced that your desire is not a passing fancy but a real vocation from God, I am sure that you will have no need of my mediation. Your father will bring you to me of his own accord, and I shall receive you into the company of the poor servants and happy spouses of our Lord. Be resigned therefore, and prepare yourself for the great step with all carefulness and deliberation, with prayer and ardent love and the practice of every virtue. I know you will do so, and therefore I have no doubt of the happy result. Our Blessed Lady whom the Sisters of Providence love so much will admit you into this her family. I will ask others also to pray for this.

A. R.

XLVIII.

TO PIETRO FALDI AT ROME.

An answer to inquiries concerning the Institute of Charity.

Stresa,

February 27th, 1843.

As it happens, there is a priest of the Institute, Don Bernardo Mazzi, staying in Rome for his health with Don Paolo Barola. If you will pay him a visit, you can obtain the information you require concerning the Institute, and see the *Rules* and *Apostolic Letters* of Approbation which contain the substance of the Constitutions.

You will gather from these that the members of the Institute propose to devote themselves entirely to the pursuit of one only good, the *perfect justice* that is taught us by Jesus Christ, while they reckon all temporal things *ut stercora*. The perfect justice taught by Jesus Christ consists first in the endeavour to purify our conscience from every stain; and further in the practice of *universal charity*, under the guidance of *obedience*, as the interpreter of Divine Providence, the manifestation of the Divine will, the voice of God Himself. You will understand how much humiliation, how much mortification of self-love and flesh and blood are entailed by such a profession of life. But on the other hand by these efforts, prayers and sufferings, man acquires the peace that the world may deride but cannot steal away or disturb. Peace is found in what is unchangeable, and God alone cannot change. The heart of Jesus alone is tranquil and peaceful, and he who dwells in His heart shares this peace; neither can persecution nor trouble destroy it, because these do not reach the heart of Jesus where the faithful disciple makes

his home. It is not necessary for me to tell you that the work you are meditating can only be begun with much prayer and accomplished by the generosity derived from prayer.

A. R.

XLIX.

TO THE COUNTESS N. N.

How temptations against Faith should be met.

Stresa,

July 8th, 1843.

Yesterday and to-day I celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you, to ask our Heavenly Father through the merits of His Son Jesus, to grant you a firm faith in this Divine Mediator and full peace. I know well how painful is the state of a soul that wishes to believe and yet is disturbed and prevented from giving a full, absolute and unconditional surrender to revealed truth by doubts that certainly come from the enemy of our souls. These doubts are like the birds spoken of by Christ in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew, which carry away the good seed cast by the wayside and with it peace of heart. Anguish and disquietude follow, and the painful effects are enough to show that such thoughts proceed from an evil principle, from Satan, not from God, who is called in Scripture the "God of peace." Is not this sufficient proof to make us reject, combat and detest them?

By its fruits the tree is known, so that if our thoughts give us bitter fruit, like desolation, they can only come from a bad tree, that is the devil. Our enemy is cunning, and we must be very prudent if we want to defeat his wiles. How did he deceive our first mother Eve? By reasoning. If Eve had not begun to argue with the

astute serpent but had believed the words of God, she would have saved herself and us also. Deceptive *arguments* are the arms invariably used by Satan to seduce men, for he always likes to appear reasonable in his assaults, and so transforms himself, as the Scripture says, into an angel of light. It was by specious arguments that the arch-enemy produced all the heresies that have rent the kingdom of Jesus Christ, by similar means he leads men to infidelity. Shall we then renounce reason? By no means: but we must be on our guard against the subtle arguments instilled by the Evil One into our minds to make us break faith with God. How can we ensure our safety? There are certain *general signs* by which we may distinguish the false reasoning of the enemy from the true arguments coming from God, the author of human reason. As soon as we have discovered the fraud, it rests with us to drive away such thoughts, lest we be seduced by the serpent. Here are some of these signs.

The first, as I was saying, is the *good* or *bad effect* produced by a given argument. If it destroys our peace of mind, it cannot come from God, who is truth itself, but from the rebel angel, the father of lies. How simple and helpful is the countersign given us by Jesus, when rightly applied: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me."

Another sign by which we may distinguish the fallacies of Satan is to notice whether the train of thought is tortuous, long, involved, one that leaves the soul a prey to doubt and secret remorse, instead of giving her complete and firm persuasions. This is a bad sign: the light of truth that comes from God is simple, tranquil, humble, satisfying, edifying. Permit me to develop this thought; I shall limit myself to explaining the characteristics of *simplicity*.

We will suppose that a person has been completely convinced by *one single proof* of the truth of the Catholic Religion, a miracle for instance, such as the resurrection of Lazarus, the resurrection of Christ, the

accomplishment of some prophecy, a miracle of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, or one of the many extraordinary facts that occurred in times of persecution, etc. The person in question is fully convinced of the truth of one of these miracles, or by some similar proof, but she cannot convince herself by her *own reasoning* of the validity of other proofs. If this person wishes to act according to reason, according to God, she should yield her assent to that truth which carries conviction by a single proof. But supposing she cannot see the force of other arguments? That is of no consequence: a single proof is sufficient testimony to the virtue of the Catholic Faith: one is bound to reject all conflicting doubts and to acknowledge that the inability to solve some problem may proceed from the limitation of human reason. If instead of doing so, one insists on reasoning and arguing the matter out, there is great danger of being deceived by the enemy.

But should the individual in question be unable to understand many articles of the Catholic Faith, and some appear absurd and contrary to reason.—This is of no consequence: the Catholic religion has been proved true for her; if it has been proved true, it is true in everything and not in part only; for the Catholic Religion presents itself to us as an indivisible whole, founded on the word of God. Neither could God confirm it, by miracles for instance, if it were false. One should argue thus: "The Catholic Religion is true; I know it to be so because I cannot deny such and such a proof; consequently all that the Catholic Religion teaches must be correct; my doubts are groundless, they are an effect of the limitation of human reason. I must renounce my own reasoning that is opposed to the general truth, of which I am convinced; I will *believe firmly* whatever the Catholic Church proposes to me to believe, and renounce every inclination to argue, as being no longer necessary." By this firm answer the enemy is already conquered: the serpent's mouth is closed: he can no longer give the lie to God or say as he once said to Eve: "What God has said is not true; you

will not die if you eat of the tree of *knowledge*." Supposing, however, that the person in question, who has already *one proof* of the truth of the Catholic Faith, will not assent until she has reasoned out all particular truths, she thereby fails in her duty and shows herself unfaithful to the known truth; instead of following humbly the word of God made manifest, she follows the counsels of pride, which are inimical to peace and truth, and productive only of disputes and contentions. We must persuade ourselves that human reason is very limited, that it cannot reach to the high mysteries revealed by God, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word in the pure womb of Mary, the Holy Eucharist and other mysteries; that reason often loses itself in the study of merely natural science, for in nature itself there is much that is inexplicable to the wisest of men; that we are liable to error in the most obvious things. If this be so, we cannot expect to unravel the mysteries of religion, but must needs bow down before them, content to embrace the various articles of that *Faith* whose truth is known in general. In acting thus, we do not sacrifice to God *true reasoning*, but only those *false reasonings*, devised by the enemy of good to our ruin.

Is not this sacrifice reasonable? Does not reason herself avow her own impotence? Are we not in duty bound to assent to and believe any truth as soon as it is recognised, without stopping to discuss it and put it to the test again? If one article of the Catholic Faith is proved to be true, then we know that all its doctrines are true, even those which we do not understand. Instead of the case of a miracle, let us take that moral proof, which you yourself find convincing. The Catholic Faith is holy: she has formed heroes of sanctity. These heroes, who were perfect examples of the most sublime virtue unknown to the world, not only adhered to this *Faith*, but it was from it alone they derived the lights and the strength which made them what they were: models of innocence and generosity, who counted it as nothing to give their lives for the sake of Divine love. Now is it

possible that God should have allowed these loving creatures of His to be deceived? Is it possible that *falsehood* and *error* (the offspring of Satan) should have led souls to God and brought about the most intimate union with Him? What an absurd idea! Then their Faith was true; then *every single article of their Faith* was true. If so, this is enough for me: I must not seek for further reasons: I must embrace these truths, though the serpent may say *nequaquam*; though he may try to involve me in useless controversy and make me lose myself in a labyrinth from which I may never get out. And all the time I am wandering through the tortuous maze I am not believing; all this time I am unfaithful to known truth, I am proving myself ungrateful to that God who has revealed it to me.

What an immense blessing is our Holy Faith! It is nothing less than a compendium of the prodigies of Divine love. A God who becomes man and dies for us, so that He may save us from sin and free us from error and ignorance the effects of sin; a God who pardons our sins and appoints ministers to assure us of His forgiveness, having pledged Himself to ratify in heaven what they loose on earth: a God-Man, who gives Himself to us as food, and promises to give Himself to us in an open and unveiled manner in heaven as a reward for our faith: all these are mysteries of love, an abyss of charity, whose depths our reason cannot sound. And why should we deny His love because it passes the narrow limits of our reason? In fact, not to believe the truth of our holy Religion, is not to believe in the love of God; to doubt, is to doubt the love of God; for the Catholic Faith ultimately only offers to us the excessive expressions of God's love for us. These excessive tokens surpass our limited reason. Reason cannot understand them; if she tries to explain them she is confounded and vacillates. But what wonder? God is God, and we are men. The difficulty we experience in fathoming such mysteries should be a new proof of their truth, a new incitement to faith, for if we do not believe in the excesses of Divine love, much less shall we be able to correspond

with them. I think I read your heart in the short time I had the honour of spending with you the other day. You wish to correspond to Divine love. Well, give up all those arguments on particular points of faith which disturb you. Start from the proofs that convince you of the truth of the Catholic Religion *in general*, and, being certain of this, believe also, without any more hesitation, in the particular dogmas she proposes to you. Faith is the first step of love. You will correspond to the love of Jesus Christ who died for you, when you adore in Him the Word made Flesh, as the Apostle and Evangelist St. John says, whom you also revere.

My dear Countess, I had taken up my pen to give you the names of some books, as you asked, and instead I have written you a long letter. As it is written, I will let it pass: you may be pleased, at any rate it will show you how earnestly I desire to see you at peace. I felt uncertain, I must say, as to the choice of books: we have some that are excellent, but you will not gain anything from books of controversy, or at any rate you must first establish this principle; that, *in order to believe it is not necessary to solve all the doubts that may rise concerning particular dogmas of the Faith*. When one doubt was solved and set at rest, ten others would spring up: the work would be interminable. Reason would never see everything; and it need only see one thing, which is this: the Catholic Religion is true. When your mind is persuaded of this general truth (as it cannot fail to be by one of the many proofs we possess;) then you should persuade yourself that all the objections and difficulties count for nothing, and you should drive them away as dangerous temptations, calling upon God Himself and saying frequently: "I believe, Lord, help Thou my unbelief." In order to conquer all your enemies at one blow, I think it is indispensable for you to grasp thoroughly this one principle: *Knowing the certainty of the Catholic Religion in general, I am also certain of her particular doctrines and must not admit any more objections*. St. Thomas in a great work

enumerates fifteen thousand objections against revealed truth, and solves them all, one after the other. If anyone waited to believe until he had studied them, he would never believe at all, and on the way he would come across fresh difficulties. When a religion receives a direct demonstration, objections can have no force, even though one may not succeed in solving them all.

In confirmation of this great principle suggested by logic, I should like you to find time to read a little work of mine: "On the Limitations of Human Reason."* After this, you might like to add the work of some apologist, treating of the Catholic Religion in general, in order to convince yourself thoroughly that this Religion is both true and divine. I should suggest the *Conferences* of Mgr. Frayssinous, or if you have read it already, the *Philosophical Catechism* of Feller. You ought to read at the same time the Gospels, since they contain our Lord's own words which are full of Divine power. The reading of the *Imitation* will help you not a little to realize the divinity of Jesus Christ. Your own prayers and those of other good persons will do the rest. It is a great grace to have such good parents as yours, whom you may trust completely. The prayers of parents for their children have great power with God.

If you would like me to suggest some other books after you have read these, I shall be pleased to do so. Your humble and devoted servant,

A. R.

* This little work forms the first part of the "Teodicea" which has lately been translated into English.

L.

TO COUNT GIACOMO MELLERIO AT MILAN.

On the election of Pius IX to the Pontifical Throne.

Stresa,

June 23rd, 1846.

As soon as your welcome letter arrived, the whole community assembled in our chapel, and a joyful *Te Deum* was sung for the double grace of a new Pastor being given to the Church, and given so quickly. This promptitude is a most edifying spectacle to the world, and proves that the Cardinals, rising superior to natural ambition, have taken into consideration only the good of the Church and needs of the times. It is also an indication of the excellent choice they must have made. I do not know Cardinal Mastai Ferretti personally, and though I am sorry for this, it does not diminish my joy and my confidence in the new Father. If you come to know anything of the measures he intends to take, let me know. I embrace you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Your affectionate friend,

A. R.

LI.

TO THE SAME.

He congratulates him on his restoration to health and gives him news of the Institute.

Stresa,

November 11th, 1846.

I am glad to hear from you, as well as from those who have seen you, that you are convalescent. All that now remains is to get strong and make use of all the precautions prescribed by the doctor. I doubt not that besides telling you not to fast too long, he will have recommended you not to tire yourself by undue exertion of mind or body. You will have to give a truce to your activity and energy for a while; to give yourself a little rest for your health's sake is the best thing you can do. All this you will take in good part from me, knowing that friendship is always prone to give advice even to those who do not need it. I can imagine how you would take to heart the trouble you mention, were you not accustomed to look at the first cause, whence everything good or evil proceeds. It may be that this misfortune will be a source of spiritual profit to those affected by it, as is generally the case, where there is any trace of religion left. God permits trouble and disgrace to rouse those who are asleep or purify those who have fallen, so that faith is sometimes able to draw consolation from what makes nature mourn.

I think you will be pleased to hear that I have received the Decree whereby the Emperor approves the Institute of our Sisters for Udine, with permission to communicate with the Superior residing abroad. It bears the date of September 22nd, and I think that the more important decree

for Verona, which I have not yet received, was signed on the same day. When the latter arrives, I shall not be long coming to see how you are for myself, as, indeed, I should have done before now unless better news had arrived. I shall pay you a visit on my way to Verona, where I hope to make a beginning soon. In the meantime, recommend this work to God in your prayers: I think it will produce great fruit if it is well founded.

I embrace you in the Lord and recommend you to our Lady, begging you also to remember me to Don Luigi and our other friends and to keep up your spirits. Adieu!

A. R.

LII.

TO ALESSANDRO MANZONI AT MILAN.

He expresses his regret at having missed seeing his friend, and speaks of Manzoni's friendly relations with the members of the Institute.

Stresa,

November 13th, 1846.

This morning, I was walking towards Lesa, when I met a man with the note announcing Manzoni's departure, so I turned back again. Yesterday, I made no movement because I was looking forward to seeing my friend Alessandro and his wife, who were expected to dine at Casa Bolongaro. The day before, the carriage was kept waiting so long by the Abbate Branzini, who wished to accompany me, that we could not go at all; and the bad weather of the preceding days prevented either of us going to the other. Thus I have been very unfortunate, having been deprived of bidding farewell to and embracing once more my beloved Manzoni.

There remains the hope that we shall meet again next

year. But even in his absence my dear Alessssandro will still always be present to me as I trust I shall be to him. And it is pleasant to think I may see him in the flesh even before next autumn, as I shall have occasion to pass through Milan, if it is true that the Emperor has approved the foundation of a house of the Institute of Charity at Verona.

In any case, you are a genuine member of this Institute, as is proved (supposing other proof were wanting) by the last lines of your dear letter, dictated by the charity that "believeth all things" and "thinketh no evil," and even though you are deceived thereby you still "rejoice in the truth," for not every error takes away our joy in the truth. Madame Bolongaro, the Abbate Branzini, P. Toscani and young Setti return thanks for your kind messages. I beg you will express my gratitude to the Countess Teresa and little Count Stefano, and do not believe me or call me what I am not, but rather believe that I am with all my heart your friend,

A. R.

P. S. Having told my good Novices that you count on the assistance of the whole Institute, they will offer Holy Communion to-morrow for you and your family, and I am sure they will pray frequently for the Author of the *Hymns*. Our Sisters here will do the same. What a consolation it would be to them (and not to them only) if in the new edition of *Opere varie* you added a Hymn on *Corpus Christi* to the others, and to the *Observations on Morals* the reflections you thought of adding!

LIII.

TO GIULIO PADULLI AT MILAN.

On the death of Count Giacomo Mellerio.

Stresa,

October 12th, 1847.

The news had already reached me yesterday of the bitter loss we have sustained in one to whom the words of Scripture were so appropriate, "a faithful friend is the medicine of life." I do not doubt that this upright and pure soul who gave tokens of his union with God until his latest breath, has already reached the happy term of that union. Nevertheless I hastened to pray for the repose of his soul; we celebrated the Holy Sacrifice for him this morning, and I immediately sent a circular to all our Houses and the Sisters of Providence soliciting the same pious offices for our excellent friend, whose memory shall always be cherished by us. But as you say, we may rather expect aid and comfort from him, who already treats intimately with the August Trinity and participates in its Omnipotence. His having sent my portrait to Alessandro Manzoni in his last moments, was not only an act of exquisite delicacy but of refined virtue. For the rest, you and your sons are included in the circle of friends whom unworthily I recommend to our Lord, and I beg you will include me always among the friends for whom you pray.

A. R.

LIV.

TO THE MARCHESE GUSTAVO CAVOUR AT TURIN.

On the death of his eldest son, slain in battle.

Stresa,

June 4th, 1848.

In the greatest misfortunes which can befall us, there is always the hand of infinite love. *Deus charitas est.* If the mysteries of mercy concealed under the rigour of His justice were disclosed to us, if they were disclosed and unveiled to our eyes as they are to the gaze of the heavenly intelligences, we should know no other feeling in prosperity or adversity but gratitude and joy. Our holy Faith supplies for our ignorance of the great designs of infinite goodness; it can give us peace of heart in the hour of affliction, as you yourself experience. But we must remember that the light of faith, if infallible, is still veiled: even whilst the superior part of our soul is comforted and strengthened, the inferior cannot but suffer keenly when those we love are taken from us. God has permitted that we should be reduced to this in consequence of the first sin, so that suffering might become a source of merit and purification, an acceptable sacrifice to God when united with that of His only-begotten Son, who suffered more than all, crucified through love.

Who can tell from how many dangers, how many faults your Augusto has been delivered? It may be there was no other way to lead his soul to heaven, where he now adores the Divine Goodness and counts the mortal wound and short suffering as great good fortune, and prays for his dear father. It may be, that if he had been struck down by illness, he would not have received the Sacraments with the

same devotion and fervour, thinking he might recover : if he had had to render account of a longer life, he might have been seized by diffidence or at least been wanting in that ardour which is peculiar to unsullied youth. Ah ! how much cause is there not to tremble for youth in this “ wicked generation ! ” When I think of the risks to which a young man is exposed in the world, I consider that God must effect a prodigy whenever one arrives in safety at the eternal city of the Saints. All that God does is done to save souls. For this Jesus Christ died ; for this the Sacraments were instituted, and they possess an infinite efficacy, because they contain in themselves the power of Jesus Christ, who left them to us in His place when He ascended to heaven. God’s work never fails of its effect : trust then to the grace of the Sacraments, with which your Augusto was strengthened for his last journey.

Let us then pray with great confidence for this dear soul, for whom we already prayed even before his death. I shall offer the Holy Sacrifice for him and recommend him to the prayers of all my companions. How consoling is the doctrine of Purgatory ! How many sins that appeared mortal to human judgment will be venial in the eyes of God, who sees the heart and makes allowance for want of knowledge or deliberation ! Be comforted then, dear Marchese. Prayers were not wanting to your Augusto in life, neither will they be in death ; and prayer made through Jesus Christ obtains all things.

A. R.

LV.

TO ANGELICA ROSMINI AT ROVERETO.

He shows her God's purpose in allowing her entrance into Religion to be deferred, and how she may best prepare for it.

Rome,

October 6th, 1848.

Whilst sympathising with you in your disappointment at seeing the doors of the earthly paradise, for which you were longing, closed to you for the present, I admire and adore in this also the design of that loving Providence, whose purpose we know to be always good and perfect. It may be that the good God wishes you to obtain the desired grace by employing yourself in good works. Perhaps He wishes you to become more perfect in the practice of virtue by enduring the thorns and troubles of the world, so that you may profit all the more by your entrance into religion and may enter with a heart completely free and disillusioned, bent only on what is spiritual and invisible. Perhaps He wishes to show you that so precious a grace must be looked for only from Him, and He means to give it to you at the right moment, against all human appearances, so that you may be indebted to Him alone all your life. Perhaps He wishes to try your constancy in loving Him alone; perhaps He wishes to see your desire grow great by waiting; so that, after being obliged to gaze from a distance at your celestial Spouse, He may be all the dearer to you when He gives himself to you for ever. Who can narrate or count all the loving purposes of God in leading His dear ones to Himself by means of external events? Let us love Him, praise Him, adore Him!

One thing is certain that you can create a solitude in your heart and live there with our Lord by faith as easily as in the most secluded convent. Oh, how much more precious is the solitude of the heart than that of the walls of a monastery! We must erect within us walls of fire, so that nothing may enter therein but the Spirit of God who is fire. These walls are the love of God and of our neighbour. When these two affections have attained a certain dominion over our hearts, we feel disgust for all earthly things; transitory delights and honours appear despicable, as, indeed everything is in comparison with heavenly love.

Besides interior recollection, we should turn our attention assiduously and constantly to the acquisition of holy humility. We must be convinced that of ourselves we are nothing, and that during all the time of our earthly pilgrimage, we shall be weak and encompassed by infirmity. We must remember, however, for our consolation, that our daily defects do not rob us of the grace and friendship of our God, so that we should not be surprised or disturbed nor expect to be freed from them all at once, but rather draw profit from our falls. We shall find therein motives for greater humility and diffidence, as also for gratitude to God who bears with us with so much patience and gives us daily opportunities of obtaining forgiveness and purifying ourselves by acts of contrition and charity and the use of sacramentals. If, day by day, our actions are sullied by this world's dust, day by day we may remove the dust, as we do from our clothes and shoes. We have the less reason to be discouraged by these defects, in that they do not prevent our meriting, making acts of virtue and constantly advancing in self-contempt and the love of God; for this progress is continuous even amidst our failings, whether these be imperfections or venial offences, though the latter in so far as they are deliberate, should be strenuously resisted. By the use of these considerations you will preserve peace of heart, more especially if you do everything with a pure intention; if you look on everything that falls

to your lot to do in the house or outside as an act of charity. Such indeed it can become if you act through charity and in the spirit of the Lord.

Adieu, my dear Angelica! Be faithful in waiting for the voice of the Spouse. I hope you will continue to pray for your cousin,

A. R.

LVI.

TO THE BARONESS DI KOENNERITZ AT DRESDEN.

He encourages her to persevere in a devout life and touches on the state of public affairs.

Ronciglione,

October 15th, 1849.

As you were not perfectly restored to health when you started for home, I was relieved to hear of your safe arrival, and still more gratified to receive the good news you give me of yourself and your dispositions. It is a great advantage to have found a prelate and confessor so worthy of your confidence, and under his direction you will be led by a safe path and advance from virtue to virtue until you reach the end for which God created you.

I was even more consoled to hear of the resolution you have made to practise all domestic virtues for the love and in imitation of Jesus Christ, and to fulfil all the duties of the position assigned to you by Divine Providence, even though it should entail much *self-denial*. "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." This is the law clearly set before us, a law unknown to the world, more profound than all philosophy. The profession of this law of abnegation and mortification entails in practice a constant struggle with self, for it is superior to all the tendencies of nature, which being

limited is necessarily selfish. Hence we should continually ask of God the grace to conquer in this terrible strife which must last as long as life itself, for victory is truly the gift of God, and perseverance in victory is an even greater gift. We can never be sure of ourselves after having conquered a hundred times: we shall fall next moment, if we trust to our own strength for an instant. How miserable an object is man, my dear Baroness, how powerless in the things of God! There remains to us however the great consolation of prayer, if we do but seek what we need so much, and is of so much importance, namely, the kingdom of God and His justice. "Ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you." Many faithful souls have become Saints by prayer, and many are becoming Saints by the same means. To pray and to know how to pray, that is to ask with all one's heart not for the frivolous things of this world, but for what is necessary, the grace of fulfilling our duties of justice and charity, that is the great secret. Many know the secret indeed in theory, but fail to practise it, and so they cannot be said to know it really, not having the light and the persuasion that leads to action.

The reflection you make on the state of public affairs is quite accurate: what you observe in Saxony we see in Italy, and others experience the same elsewhere. Here we can see no happy solution; indeed, the outlook is so dark, that it is impossible for the human mind to conceive what the end of this tragedy-comedy will be. It is not likely that the Holy Father will return to his States at present. People who are usually prudent seem to have lost the use of reason; on all sides there are enmities, everywhere we find incoherence, divisions, misunderstandings, schisms, even among the good: nowhere is there union or charity.

Amid all this confusion and inconsistency, I thank God that I am able to retire to my religious solitude, to which I am on my way. The world calls this dis-

grace: but never before did I leave Rome with so light a heart. I have acted according to the dictates of my conscience, our Lord has rewarded me by withdrawing me from grave dangers and a heavy responsibility that might have been prejudicial to my soul. I am writing to you whilst travelling as I did not wish to delay answering your letter any longer. The kind way in which you write to me assures me of your prayers for me who am with much esteem and respect yours sincerely,

A. R.

LVII.

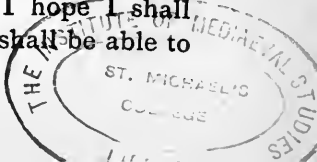
TO ANGELICA ROSMINI.

He exhorts her to prepare herself worthily for her entrance into religion.

Stresa,

November 26th, 1849.

Your letter was very welcome, my dear Angelica, not only because I am glad to see you have not forgotten me, but above all because it gives me to understand that our Lord continues to favour you with His lights and interior consolation, and peacefully disposes things in order to draw you to Himself and become your Spouse. I had already been informed of the arrangements concluded by my good D. Puecher, and the name of the garden of lilies to which you are to be transplanted. I was glad to hear of it, because I have a great opinion of that Convent, and also because I directed the late Superior by letter for many years; she was a Saint, and, indeed, favoured with extraordinary gifts. It may be owing to her prayers that you are going to enter the Convent. Though I do not know what Providence may dispose, I hope I shall still be here when you come, and that we shall be able to



spend a little time together. In the meantime, continue to make your preparations for the Espousals, for your Spouse expects you to come attired like a queen. My dear Angelica, do not doubt, be brave: though He is a great King, He is most affable, gentle and indulgent, for He is Love itself. The betrothal has already taken place, and this means a great deal; you have acquired the right to speak to Him confidentially and to put in a word for me. Yes, for me too, for I need it so much, and He never refuses Himself to the needy, but stays willingly with the poor. As for my health, about which you inquire, I am well and more cheerful than I was in Rome. I will not stop to say any more now, because I have a great number of letters waiting to be answered, and because I hope to see you soon, and still more because we can always meet in God; and in order to do this better still, you must offer a Communion for me and I will remember you especially in my Mass to-morrow. Adieu!

A. R.

LVIII.

TO THE BARONESS DI KOENNERITZ AT DRESDEN.

Of the Holy Father's return to Rome.

Stresa,

April 16th, 1850.

By this time the Holy Father will have been restored to his capital, as Monsignor Stella has doubtless informed you. The news I have received from Rome this morning speaks of his entering the States amid great demonstrations of joy, and it is believed that Rome will receive him with every token of attachment. He has intimated that he does not wish for any public demonstration, but there will be some spontaneous private display, and it seems probable that Rome has partly, at least, repented of her ingratitude, having learnt by experience how prejudicial to her interests is the mere absence of the Pontiff. It is true that difficulties do not appear the first day: but let us trust in God. Christian hope, which confoundeth not, is, after all, the best balsam for all wounds. Knowing that an excellent and all-wise Providence over-rules all things, we are certain that what appears most painful and perverse will finally redound to the greater good of the Kingdom of God and to the greater glory of that King, whose reign is endless, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth.

I was glad to see by your letter of the 18th of March that you ponder these great truths and draw therefrom the consolation you require in your painful circumstances, and the constancy which will strengthen your soul and enable you to conquer all your enemies and to work out your perfection. For it is a pleasing spectacle to God,

when a soul remains tranquil and immovable amid the turmoil of the world and rises superior to tribulation, and instead of being scandalized takes occasion from every event to praise and glorify the Lord. Prayer, the intimate prayer by which a soul pours itself out before God, is the source of that wisdom which not only enlightens the mind but strengthens and inflames the will.

Continue your charity in praying for me, as I unworthily do for you, and accept the sentiments of sincere esteem with which I have the honour to be

Yours in Jesus Christ,

A. R.

LIX.

TO THE SAME.

Of the designs of God in permitting suffering.

Stresa,

February 20th, 1851.

Although the news you give me of your health is not as good as it might be, I am not bereft of satisfaction, for I think I perceive that the good God in His providence and mercy wishes to spur you on as usual by means of sickness and suffering, and to detach you more and more from the allurements of this world and make you all His. I perceive that an attraction has already arisen in your heart towards a life separated from the world and consecrated to the charity of our Creator. May He who has inspired the thought, accomplish and crown it with His grace! May He lead you to the possession of that peace which Jesus Christ bequeathed to His disciples, an ineffable peace which the world ignores and derides but of which it cannot rob them!

If, as you give me reason to hope, you come to Italy

again this spring, I trust that you will benefit by the change as regards health and greater tranquillity of mind.

As for me, I am living quietly enough in my solitude at Stresa, a place well adapted to the kind of life I love best. I say quietly enough, although I am still the target of many enemies. Many persons are trying to blacken my reputation and to persuade the Holy Father to prohibit my writings. But all this does not disturb me, because I trust in the Lord. And I know the Holy Father himself must have perceived by this time that many are not acting in good faith. I beg you will continue to recommend me to our Lord, as I on my part remember you in my poor prayers. May His words abide in us abundantly! Accept the sentiments of esteem with which I have the honour to be

Your humble and devoted servant in Christ,

A. R.

LX.

TO THE SAME AT ROME.

On the same subject.

Stresa,

March 25th, 1852.

I perceive from your kind letter of the 15th instant, that if our Lord is pleased to visit you with suffering, He gives you at the same time the precious gift of resignation and patience, which makes what is a burden to the flesh useful to the spirit.

It is certainly the intention of a loving Providence, in afflicting us with ill-health, to detach us more from visible things and make us appreciate those invisible things which are eternal and incorruptible. I trust that the tranquillity of your surroundings and the bright season we

are entering upon (which will be especially delightful in Rome) will have a beneficial effect on your health.

In what you say about me, I only perceive an indication of your usual kindness. For the rest, the thought that everything which happens is disposed by God, is so sweet that it is sufficient to make us completely tranquil and content. Faith assures us that, if men change, God is always the same, always essentially good, and that the act by which He humbles us is as laudable as the act by which He exalts us ; so that if we live by faith, as the just should live, we should rejoice equally, in the superior part of our soul, in one case as in the other. For my part, I can never cease to thank the Lord, who has given me to understand this consoling truth, and I feel so happy in my humiliation that I should not like to be delivered therefrom, were it not for the sake of conforming myself anew to the Divine will. There is only one thing which distresses me a little, and that is to see the harm done to the Institute of Charity in the person of its superior by the way in which I am treated, subjected as I am to a prosecution which all the world is talking about, which covers me with a cloud of suspicions, and which, so I am told, far from accelerating they are trying to suspend and protract indefinitely ! But God knows the times and the moments, so I shall never cease to bless Him in this also.

Continue to assist me by your prayers, for there is nothing on which I rely more than the prayers of the good ; and when you visit the Vatican Basilica especially place me under the protection of St. Peter, the rock on which the immense and unfailing edifice of His Church is raised. With sentiments of profound respect,

I remain

Your humble and obedient servant,

A. R.

LXI.

TO THE SAME AT ROME.

Of his life at Stresa.

Stresa,

September 17th, 1852.

To what can I attribute your kind and cordial remembrance, of which your last letter is a fresh proof, save to the charity imparted to you by our Lord? It is peculiar to charity not only to compassionate our neighbour, but also to look at him in the most favourable light. Even should it happen that, on account of this benevolent disposition, some error of judgment should occur, it is still a fortunate error, since it increases one's merit before God and contributes to union amongst men. It is a certain compensation for the coldness only too apparent among the men of the world, who, as St. Paul said of the Gentiles, live "without affection," whence arise discord, schisms and wars. I am thus led to see what progress you have made in the ways of the spirit, for the spirit of our Lord manifests itself, in point of fact, by affection.

I trust that your health will be improved by the pure air and delightful climate of your residence. I spent two happy months there in 1849 with Cardinal Tosti, whose acquaintance you will have made by now. I shall always feel the deepest gratitude to that excellent prelate, who showed me the greater friendship at a time when many other friends were leaving me like the swallows. Pray remember me to him if you have an opportunity.

In your kindness you wish to know something of my life, and I should not like to refuse to gratify your request. I live very quietly far from the world, in a little place called Stresa, beautifully situated on Lago Maggiore, where the lake is widest and bordering on Switzerland. Although it is not as warm as Albano, and the magnifi-

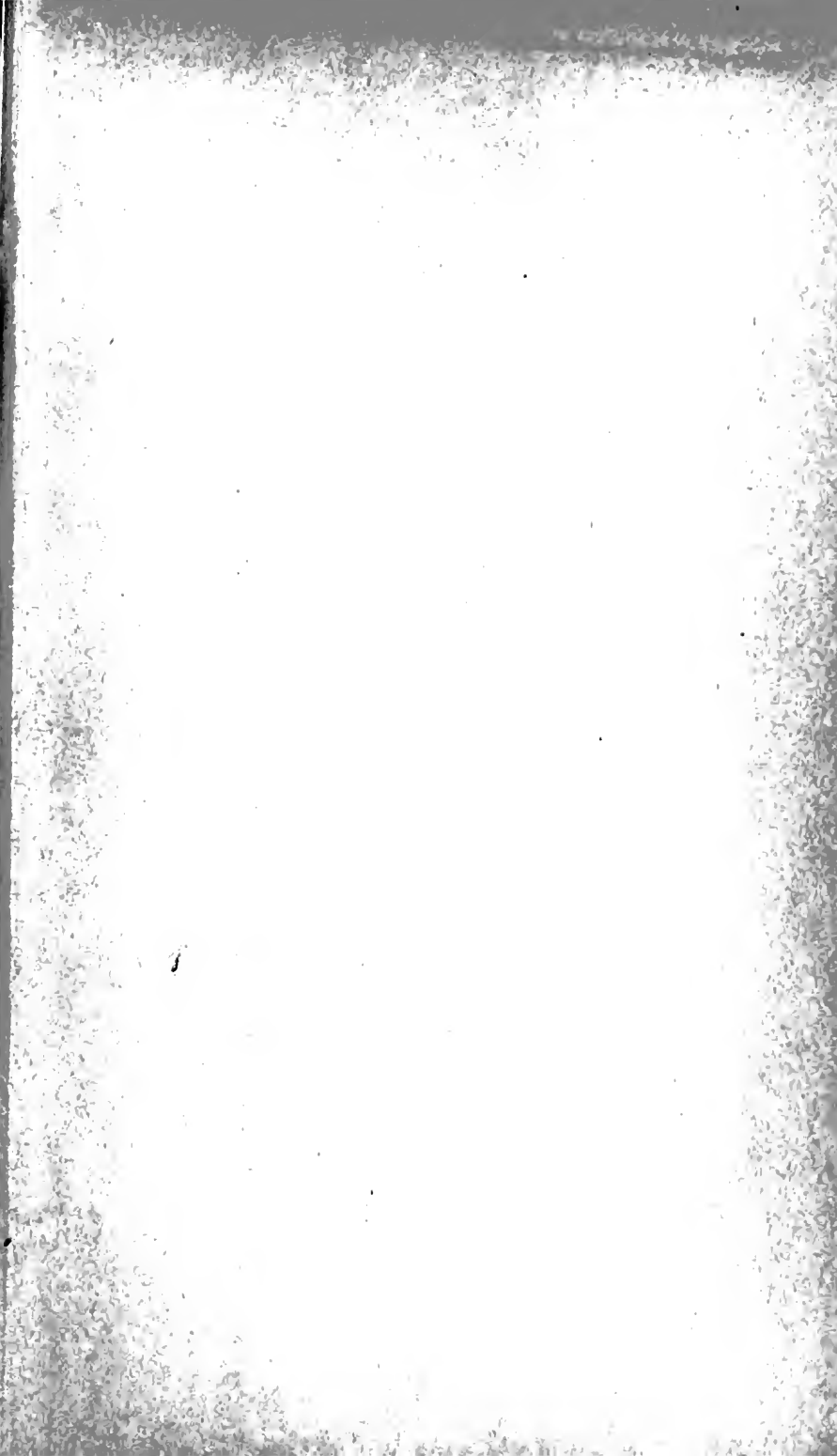
cent galleries and colouring of Licino are wanting, still there are many enchanting scenes, and the sight of the sunrise and sunset lighting up the mountains and hills and painting their various curves with ever-changing tints, is a constant delight to the eye and yields to none other. I tell you this to induce you to carry out your resolution of visiting this part of Italy also.

Occupation is never wanting to me here, indeed it is beyond my strength, for how can employment be wanting among men who have so many wants of every kind and so pressing a duty of mutual assistance? I can never understand why people complain of not knowing how to employ their time; as if our Lord Jesus Christ when commanding us to love one another, had not opened to us a vast field, wherein to exercise and even to consume the strength and time of every one of us. This labour assigned to us by our Divine Master, besides being more than sufficient, is also most noble and delightful. Would that I could imitate better than I do the charitable activity of all my companions, who leave me far behind! I have lately had the consolation of seeing P. Pagani on his return from England, a man of great piety and learning whose devout books you may have read. Many other friends come to visit me, but the one from whom I derive most pleasure and profit is Alessandro Manzoni. Just now I am deprived of his society, as he has gone to Tuscany to see his daughters.

I have now described my life briefly, my dear Baroness, as you wished. I have not mentioned my ordinary studies because they are included in the class of works by which one benefits or tries to benefit one's neighbour. Certainly I do not know what other motive could induce me to pursue such arduous studies, except the hope of doing some good to my brethren, and of thus accomplishing the will of God. I hope you will continue to remember before our Lord, him who has the honour to be

Yours in Christ,

A. R.





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